THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE OF PRAYER

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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'THE VALLEY OF VISION'

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

. . . I have tried my best to do as you asked me, and to work out in fuller detail the few practical suggestions I sent you on the subject of prayer.[1] Very few they were, I know, and *very* meagre. I did not feel equal to offering you anything worthy to be called instruction on the subject, nor do I now. All that I can attempt is to pass on to you the thoughts, and hints, and practical directions which I in my turn have found helpful in trying to learn to pray—as a matter of force, I mean, and not merely of form.

It is with *our* part in prayer only that I have ventured to deal, so that if you want to study the deep mysteries of God's part—and to do so is the surest way of learning to pray with power—you must refer to the teaching of those trained in theology. I have made

[1] See "The Christian Science of Life," pp. 110 *et seq.*

out a list of a few useful books, in case you may wish to know of them.[1]

The *mysteries* of prayer call for careful study; the *science* needs to be practised and applied. Merely to read about it is of no more value here than with any other science of applied force. It is a great thing in prayer, as in rowing or in lifting heavy weights, to learn how to exert your energy most profitably; but the actual benefit to you of all such knowledge will be in proportion to the efforts you put forth. Science can show you how to apply these; it cannot save you from making them.

So I would beg of you beforehand to determine for yourself the value of such suggestions as I have to offer, by putting them into practice, and for your encouragement I can promise you that even the most halting first steps in this direction will bring a rich reward. To learn for oneself even a little of what prayer

" . . . may be—hath been, indeed, and is,"

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[1] See Appendix.

is to gain one's first glimpse into a new heaven and a new earth.

Only a dim, imperfect glimpse it may be, at first, yet as you "follow on to know the Lord," you will find your whole life, as well as your prayers, transformed, gradually as the change from dawn to day, "by the renewing of your mind."

. . . One last word as to the personal form in which I have written throughout *to* as well as *for* you. I have chosen this simply because it was the only way in which I could write at all upon this difficult subject. So you will not see in it any desire on my part to impose on you the limits of my own experience, and when you find—as you surely will—faults in thought and expression, I would beg of you to pray for me, as I do for you, St Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians :—

"*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ;*

that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."

FIRST PART

PRINCIPLES

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE OF PRAYER

CHAPTER I

EFFECTUAL PRAYER

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."—St James v. 16.

You want to find the secret of effectual prayer; to learn how to make your prayers a matter of force, not of form, a source of real, living power, and not merely a weariness and disappointment. How can I help you in this? Only, I think, by trying to show you how to gain a living hold for yourself upon the principles and practice of what I venture to call the Christian science of prayer.

I use the phrase in the same sense as when I wrote to you about the Christian "science" of life, meaning by it a definite theory of effort, worked out in a practical method, and

based upon that interpretation of life which belongs inseparably to a personal faith in a living Lord. You may remember a definition of the word *science* which I quoted to you once before, as "knowledge classified and made available in work, life, and the search for truth." So that any sincere endeavour to systematise effort may fairly claim to be counted "scientific," at any rate in intention. We say that a man does his work scientifically when he sets about it with a careful adjustment of his efforts to the end in view.

Now this is exactly what is so often lacking in our prayers. We know—sometimes, at any rate—the results we want to accomplish, but many of us have never been taught how to direct our efforts with any precision of purpose when we pray. So that it is not surprising if we rise from our knees, again and again, with a restless, dissatisfied sense of having missed our mark.

A practical *science* of prayer is one of the chief needs in our spiritual training; of that I am sure; and it must be a *Christian* science if it is to put us in possession of all the powers

and possibilities which are our Christian heritage. You will not have forgotten Bishop Westcott's definition of a Christian as one who "throws himself in absolute confidence upon a living Lord." It is this *personal* relationship of love and trust which forms the basis of the Christian science of prayer, and gives it its distinctive character.

For not all prayer is Christian, and by no means every so-called prayer is worthy of the name. Indeed, there is so much vagueness of thought upon this point, that the first step I should suggest, towards learning to pray effectually, is to arrive at a clear understanding as to what prayer *is*, and also what it *is not*.

Take the "*nots*" first, for in them you may dispose at once of a number of hindrances to progress.

Prayer, then, is *not* a process whereby we can make use of God's power in order to accomplish our desires; nor is it merely a means of gaining benefits for ourselves or others. The urgency wherewith we state our needs is *not* the power which fulfils them, and those

are not the most effectual prayers which bear the closest resemblance to a stores' list. The act of prayer does not consist in presenting a series of demands upon an unlimited Providence, nor yet in trying to achieve some end by the force of our own will.

There are one or two passages in the New Testament which I would commend to your consideration in connexion with this first question of what prayer is *not*.

"Ye ask and receive not," wrote St James, "because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." And our Lord Himself warned His followers not to let their prayers be like those of the heathen who "think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

In fact, you must seek further than your own words, or your own desires, if you would light upon the true secret of prevailing prayer. The "effectual fervent prayer" which "availeth much" is the prayer of some one in true, close and living touch with God.

Prayer involves a vital relationship with a living Person; and Christian prayer demands that this Person shall be Man, so that He may

be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and God, so that He is "able to save to the uttermost those that come to Him." And it finds fulfilment of this demand in the approach made *to* God the Father, *through* God the Son, who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

We will come back again later to this aspect of prayer; for the moment I only want to commend it to you, briefly, to think over for yourself. And then you will go on, if you are wise, from considering what prayer *is*, to try and realise something of what it can *do* for you. For this means the opening up of such a boundless store of glorious possibilities.

It is not too much to say that true prayer, truly persevered in, can transform the whole of life for you. It may not necessarily alter your outward circumstances—although marvellous changes in these do often follow upon prayer—but they will come to bear a different aspect in your eyes.

If you have ever truly prayed, you will

recognise this as a simple matter of experience. You will be able to look back upon difficulties which once daunted you, but now have disappeared, you scarcely know how; upon "unbearable" trials, as you once thought them, which have ceased to trouble you. You will be able to rejoice, too, in new joys that have silently come into your life, and you will find that, in this direction or that, you are gradually gaining strength of heart, and confidence, and calmness.

Whatever your work may be, prayer will help you to do it better. As that great expert in prayer, Father John of Cronstadt, wrote:—

"Pray fervently; you will thus obtain tranquility, energy, and success in your work for the whole day."

You gain *patience*, too—the power to wait as well as to work, and to leave the issues of your efforts in God's hands with perfect calmness; and this in itself will increase immeasurably the worth of all you do, besides lessening the restlessness and fret which are so much more wearing than any work. And

you will be spared all the heart-ache and the disappointments which are bound to follow upon efforts made in your own strength.

In short, your life and your whole self can be, in the most practical and real sense, "transformed by the renewing of your mind" in earnest, constant prayer. Try to *realise* this thought; to make it *mean* something definite to you. And then go on to grasp the next truth, that this marvellous, transforming power of prayer is within your reach, as it is within the reach of every Christian. It is not a question of natural gifts, or of circumstances, or even of education, but simply of letting the power of prayer do its perfect work in your life. It is God's part to supply the power; it is yours to use it, and to live by it, and to see that it is not wasted or checked by hindrances of your own making.

So that if you have not yet found in your prayers a true source of transforming power, say to yourself, *not* that prayer is useless, but that you have not yet learnt its secret. Make up your mind to try afresh; and as a

help and a spur in this, set before you these three thoughts :—

(1) That there *is* such a thing as real, true, living power in prayer, and that it is a power that can work wonders beyond our dreams.

(2) That this power is within the reach of every one of us to make our own.

(3) That time and trouble are needed to win it, and that it is abundantly well worthy of both.

CHAPTER II

CAUSES OF FAILURE

"Ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss."

If the secret of effectual prayer is really within the reach of all who "profess and call themselves Christians," why is it that our prayers so often fail? That is a question which forces itself upon our minds again and again, and the answer, I think, often is that we have not given them the chance to succeed. We may have prayed earnestly—passionately even—and all the while, perhaps, our energies were being wasted through misdirection, or hindered by faulty habits of thought and practice.

You know how often it happens thus in other efforts, and how the whole difference between success and failure may lie, again and again, in the attention paid to seemingly trivial details; and it is just the same with

our prayers. So you will not think it unspiritual, I hope, or unworthy in any way, if I suggest that you should take account of a few commonplace causes of failure which work as fatally in prayer as in other ventures. If you are troubled by none of them, so much the better!

(1) *Inattention*

There is no habit which we recognise more surely as fatal to success in other efforts, and yet none which we are more prone to cultivate in prayer. We foster it every time that we "say our prayers" with our lips only, or—yet still more fatal method!—by letting certain sequences of phrases pass through our minds, or before our eyes, without even taking the trouble to form the words.

You have only to fix your mind upon the endeavour to control your thoughts, in order to realise what an appalling degree of nimbleness they have acquired. The first step towards learning to concentrate your attention when you pray may very well consist in finding out how prone it is to wander.

It is a disheartening discovery, but at least it lays bare one cause of failure which lies within your own power to remove.

(2) *Unreality*

Unreality in our prayers; the making of professions which mean little to us; the offering up of petitions that express no real longings on our part; here you have another very common hindrance. Or rather, not so much a hindrance, obstructing progress, as a poison, robbing us of strength.

For that, and no less, is what unreality does for us, in prayer as in every other exercise of force. It makes our efforts not only worthless, but a source of delusion also, making us flatter ourselves that we are doing something, when in fact we are effecting nothing. A number of professing Christians are daily strengthening this habit of unreality by the facility with which they are accustomed to *say* prayers which they do not *pray*—which they would often shrink from praying, if they stopped to think about it.

It is not an easy evil to combat when it has laid hold upon one, and yet it must be fought if ever we are to find the secret of true power in prayer.

(3) *Hurry*

Here you have another very common source of failure; easier to deal with than the last, as being more external; harder, also, because it is so far-reaching in our lives. We are all of us in a hurry nowadays, all the time! It is the way in which we spoil half our efforts, and, among them, that of prayer. So long as we are content to go on in the condition of having "no time" for our prayers, we must not be surprised if we have no power in them either.

This is a point overlooked by those dissatisfied Christians who abandon their childhood's faith for some newer teaching, and claim to have gained in the exchange a whole new world of power. They forget to compare the amount of time and pains which they have spent in learning the new system with the hurried moments snatched from

other claims for the repetition of their daily prayers.

I think you will find it worth while to challenge yourself very carefully in this matter of hurry, and to attack it, if need be, in every department of life, with a view to helping you in your prayers. The great St Francis de Sales directed one of his penitents to begin her course of spiritual discipline by learning to *walk slowly*, and the advice will bear application to other ordinary exertions. A modern expert in physical and mental training has much the same counsel to give:—

"The secret of success in practice is to avoid hurry; to do one little thing thoroughly and leisurely without any regard for time, without any regard for what is to come next; to do it as if everything would wait until one had done it; as if there were nothing else in the world, and never would be."[1]

The advice is well worth taking to heart, and applying to the practice of prayer. It will help to dispose of one cause, at any rate, of failure—and a very frequent one!

[1] Eustace Miles, "The Power of Concentration."

(4) *Unkind Thoughts*

Have you ever considered what a fatal hindrance all harsh or unforgiving thoughts are to any true power in prayer? It is not a hindrance that we are very willing to recognise, for most of us are apt to cherish, in some corner of our hearts, old grudges which we do not want to forego, or sore memories of slights and injuries that we tell ourselves we have every right to resent, or harsh thoughts about others, justifying the attitude we wish to take towards them.

It often requires a real sacrifice of just grievances before we can bring ourselves even to desire to clear our minds of all the unkind thoughts they have come to harbour. Yet we have our Lord's own assurance that this sacrifice is the indispensable price of power in prayer.

"When ye stand praying, *forgive*, if ye have aught against any" (St Mark xi.).

I have suggested only a few out of many common causes of failure in our prayers;

you can add to the list for yourself. The point I want to set before you is that prayer, like other efforts, has its conditions of success, and that if these are disregarded we have no right to wonder that our prayers lack power.

CHAPTER III

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."—1 CORINTHIANS xiv.

HERE, as with the causes of failure, I want you to consider, for the moment, only the most ordinary conditions of success, which you have it in your power to apply to your prayers, as to other undertakings. I shall suggest no more than three which seem to be specially worthy of attention.

(1) *A True Aim*

This is, I suppose, the first condition of success in every exercise of force—that we should be sure about our *aim*. Otherwise we run the risk of wasting our efforts by misapplying them.

Have you ever paused to consider what aim you are actually setting before you when

you kneel down to pray? I can think of four possible ones; you may be able to add others.

(i)

There is the aim of simply satisfying your conscience with the sense of a duty done. A good many prayers are said in this way, and they may fulfil their purpose so far as our own satisfaction is concerned. But I doubt if they have much power.

(ii)

Then there is the aim—so much more common than we are willing to admit!—of somehow propitiating God. If we could read the secrets of all hearts we should be amazed, I fancy, to find how many hurriedly repeated prayers are prompted by a nervous fear of the possible consequences of leaving them unsaid. The idea of a God to be appeased dies hard, and so does the hope of evading true loyalty by a slavish observance of the outward forms of respect. We need no one to tell us that prayers recited as a charm are

ineffectual prayers, yet it is wonderful how prone we are to practise them.

(iii)

Less obvious, but even more common is the mistake we make when we aim at using God's power rather than at trusting to His love. Our prayers can never be truly effectual until we give up trying to control God's ways of working, and to dictate the exact manner in which His help shall come. For we see only such a few steps of the way, while He sees all. Again and again the true answer to our prayers is: "Ye know not what ye ask"—what the results you crave must cost, what obstacles there are to be cleared away; what consequences would follow.

I expect you know that beautiful parable in verse, in the "Silver Store,"[1] about the two hermits who planted each an olive tree, to yield oil for the midnight lamp, and each sought God's blessing on it, in earnest prayer. You remember how one, in his anxiety to secure the speediest results, prayed categori-

[1] Rev. S. Baring Gould.

cally for rain, and sun, and warmth, and cold, in turn, as he felt each was needed; and how each petition was granted, and yet—the little tree drooped and died. So its owner went, in bitter disappointment, to his brother hermit, whose tree was flourishing, to ask what he had done or prayed for, to secure so much happier results. The answer was quite simple:—

"Said the other, 'I entrusted
To its God my little tree;
He who made knew what it needed
Better than a man like me.

Laid I on Him no conditions,
Fixed no ways and means, so I
Wonder not my olive thriveth,
Whilst thy olive-tree did die.'"

(iv)

This brings one on to the *true* aim of prayer, which is, surely, to make it possible for God to work through us, instead of striving to seize upon His power to work our will. This does not mean passive resignation, but active co-operation, with that "almighty and most merciful Father," who knows our needs and our longings "before we ask, and our ignorance

in asking." It means that our prayers *cannot* be wasted, that they *are* being used "above all that we ask or think," even though it may be secretly and in hidden ways that seem long to our impatience.

As a practical effort, it means that you should try to realise, whenever you kneel down to pray, that the true object and aim of prayer is *not* that we should use God, but that He should make use of us.

I have a few practical hints to offer you, later on,[1] as to the manner in which we can set this aim before us.

(2) *The Centre of Effort*

When you have arrived at a right aim in any undertaking, the next step is to learn how best to set about its fulfilment. You need to find out the true "centre of effort"—the point upon which your energies must be concentrated in order to produce their full effect.

You know how important a matter this is in physical feats, and how one man will succeed where another fails, *not* by exerting

[1] See chapters x. and xi.

more strength, but by focussing it upon the right point; and it is just the same with our prayers. The efforts of mind and will which we expend so fruitlessly on the attainment of a certain end acquire new force when we concentrate them, instead, upon drawing ourselves and others into closer touch with God. For it is by *His* power, and not ours, that our end must be accomplished.

Personally, I find it a help to compare the process of prayer with work done by means of electricity, the source of power being not in the actual instrument employed, but in the current of force with which it is connected. So that the point of first importance is to form that connection, rather than to try and achieve results with a tool that has no driving power behind it.

Only try the experiment of applying this to your prayers, and I think you may be amazed to find how great a difference it makes in their fruitfulness. Try to impress upon your mind the thought that the centre of power lies not in yourself but in God; in His love, not in your desires. Focus your efforts,

first and chiefly, upon coming into close, true, living touch with God, and you will find that your prayers gain in force and lose in feverishness. For you will no longer be wearing yourself out, and wasting energy, by struggling to do God's work without being in touch with Him.

(3) *The Power of Words*

I wonder if you have ever tried to make a full use of the power which *words*—written, heard or spoken—can exercise in strengthening our intentions and shaping our desires in prayer? It is a power effectively used in most forms of mind-culture, and strangely neglected in our spiritual training—to our great loss.

The true *power* of words is only brought into action by allowing them to do their own work, *one by one*. Quite fatal to its exercise is the facility which we gain in "skimming," or in "taking in the sense" of whole sentences at a time. You must let your eye rest upon each word in its turn—or, better still, let your lips form them—if you would gain the

full benefit of their power to concentrate and control. One of Father John's "Counsels" to the beginner in the art of prayer is that he should make it an absolute rule to "pronounce the words of the prayer slowly, and with pauses."

"*Wait until every word gives back its corresponding echo in your heart.*"[1]

Here also I should like to persuade you to *try the experiment.* Take any familiar form of prayer that you are in the habit of hurrying through mechanically, and try the effect of *saying* it word by word, deliberately, with your lips if not with your voice; endeavouring to give each word in turn the opportunity of impressing your mind with its full significance. Make no attempt to *force* a meaning; let it simply come home to you, word by word. You will find that the old form has gained a new power to shape your thoughts, and kindle your desires.

Try the same plan, also, with statements of belief. *Assert* these, in their own words,

[1] "Thoughts and Counsels of Father John" (Selections), Mowbray.

trying, as you do so, to make those words your own. Assert your own intentions, too, and your resolves—definitely, and in words. You will find that this strengthens your will in a wonderful manner, besides committing you to the actual undertaking of efforts which otherwise you might have been content vaguely to contemplate. The mere fact of putting into words some purpose or desire serves to impress it more deeply upon your mind, and by uttering the words you carry the work further still.

You will find some more detailed suggestions later on,[1] as to the manner of using this power of the spoken word; for the moment I only want to ask you to take it into account as one of the methods by which we can do our part in securing for our prayers the best conditions of success.

(4) *The Question of Time*

The question of time—that also needs to be taken into account among those "conditions of success" in prayer which lie within our own

[1] See chapters iv., x., xi.

control. A double question it is; first, as to the amount of time we give to our prayers, and next, as to our manner of using it.

If you are wise you will challenge your own practice on both sides, beginning, I should advise, with a short calculation as to the number of minutes which you find yourself able to spare out of every twenty-four hours. A great many Christians never arrive at this reckoning and so neither do they arrive at ever having time for prayer.

Prayer takes time—that is one maxim to be mastered, if you would learn to pray effectually, and another is, *prayer-time is time well spent.* The second is the harder to adopt, but you must not pass it by on that account. For until you have realised that the moments snatched from the rush of life for quiet prayer are *not* wasted, you will continue to find that you have "no time" for the most supremely important work in all the world. So that the first point is to learn how to make the most of your "prayer-minutes"; and as a help in this I commend to you a few simple rules.

(i)

First, make up your mind *beforehand* how many minutes you can set aside for prayer, out of every twenty-four hours. Don't leave the question to be settled by the hurry of the moment, or the pressure of other claims.

(ii)

Look upon your daily prayers as an *engagement made with God*—an appointment to hold intercourse with Him. You would not lightly fail an ordinary friend whom you had promised to meet at a certain hour; surely you should be not less careful to keep your tryst with the King of kings.

(iii)

Make a deliberate offering to God, beforehand, of the time you are going to spend in prayer.

However much or little that time may be—whether five minutes, or fifteen, or fifty—you will enhance its value a hundredfold by thinking of it, definitely, as so much time *already given* to God. This will save you from

grudging the moments as they pass, and from trying to save a few by hurrying your prayers. There is not much satisfaction to be gained from the so-called "devotions" which we race through with one eye on the clock and a nervous dread of being late for the "next thing."

(iv)

Make a definite resolve to use every second of the time thus set apart to the utmost of your power. Or rather, make it an offering to God, for *Him* to use and bless. Try to impress upon your mind, in every way you can, the fact that what *matters* is that you should make the very most of so many minutes' intercourse with God, and *not* that you should hurry through a certain number of forms of prayer.

(5) *Summary*

Four points, then, I want to suggest for your consideration, as conditions of success lying within your own power to secure for your prayers:

(i)

First, that you should make it your aim in prayer to co-operate with God, rather than to control His working; to "lift up your heart" to Him, and not draw down His power for you to wield.

(ii)

Next, that you should fix your thoughts upon *contact with God*, as by far the most important part of all prayer. Unless you are in living touch with Him, your most passionate petitions are of little worth.

(iii)

Also, that you should use the *words* of your prayers to stimulate your devotion, and the power of assertion to strengthen your resolves.

(iv)

And lastly—though by no means least!—that you should measure your devotions by minutes rather than by forms of prayer; making it your intention not to get a certain number of prayers said, but to spend so many minutes in close and living touch with God.

CHAPTER IV

IN TOUCH WITH GOD

"Without Me ye can do nothing."—St John xv.

I have already urged on you the importance of coming into close and living touch with God, if you want to pray effectually; but it would be truer to speak of *realising* the relationship in which we already stand towards Him. For it is there all the time, only we are so apt to ignore it, and to leave unused our deepest store of strength. We are like men straining every nerve over a task too hard for them, while all the time it needs only an outstretched hand to bring into action a stupendous force.

Ever since our baptism we have held in our possession the secret of effectual prayer, although, alas! we have so often failed to use it. And that secret has been the threefold relationship in which all Christians

stand towards God. Our task is not to *create* that relationship, but simply to *realise* it; to make it, that is, an actual, practical reality in our lives, influencing thought and effort.

It is a *threefold* relationship—we need to remember that. There is a fatal loss of power involved in the very common habit of simplifying prayer by reducing it to a mere process of proffering petitions to a Deity whose relation to ourselves is vague and undefined. Or even if in our prayers we think of God in one relationship only—as a loving Father, or as the Redeemer who died for us, or as a spiritual force working the miracles we desire—we are lessening our power by just so much as we take from the completeness of the relationship into which we were drawn, at our Baptism, with the "Three Persons in one God."

For that relationship is not, as we are sometimes apt to fancy, a mere matter of abstract theological definition, but a source of vital power in our daily lives. How are you to make it a living reality to yourself—to *use*

it, and rest upon it, and translate it into terms of your own experience?

These are questions which you must answer for yourself if you are to find the help you need; all I can do is to offer you a few practical suggestions as to how to set about it. How far they may be of use to you, you only can decide; and you can do so, I think, only by trying them.

As a definite exercise, to strengthen your hold upon the vital facts included in your relationship towards God, I should recommend you to take the Catechism summary of the main features of this relationship.

"First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world.

Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind.

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God."

Ask yourself how far you have really and truly "learnt to believe" all this as a matter of vital conviction, and not merely of conventional assent. If you cannot honestly feel that you have yet reached this point,

I think you will find it a helpful plan to make this statement of belief into an exercise to be practised, clause by clause.

I will try and show you what I mean; but only as an illustration, please remember, to help you in working it out for yourself. My words are not likely to be exactly those that you would use, and, in any case, you will gain much from the actual effort of finding your own form of expression.

My own plan is to use the familiar summary every morning, as a prelude to the first prayers of the day, and as a means of gaining fresh strength, and fresh assurance, from the force of assertion which it enables me to employ. I stand up to say it, pausing over each clause in turn to try and bring its meaning home to my own mind, by expanding it in some such words as these:

"*I believe in God the Father, Who made me and all the world.*"

I *believe* in Him; I can trust Him, that is, with myself and all that concerns me. There can be no limits to His power over that which He has made, and His power

must be controlled by love, since He is our Father.

"*I believe in God the Father.*" At any rate, it is my *will* to believe in Him, and to trust unreservedly both to His power and to His love.

But I find this hard to do; hosts of unworthy thoughts and desires and fears flock in to distract my mind, so I pass on to the second assertion of belief also in *God the Son, Who hath redeemed me and all mankind.*" Which means, I take it, that He, at His own great cost, has placed within our reach the power of escape from those slave-fetters with which our sins hamper and fret us, and drag us down.

I believe that He has *redeemed me*, so that I must believe that He can make it possible for me to throw off the slavery of old bad habits of wrong thoughts cherished, or of wrong ways of speech or action.

"I *believe* in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all the world"; therefore I must put my belief to a practical test by trying to *use* this possibility of a fresh start which He has gained for me. Yet I find

this no easy matter. I hardly know how or where to begin; and the sins which "so closely cling to us" are not lightly shaken off. Also, the *will* to shake them off is not always easy to command. Again and again I have been forced to feel that I have not only failed in my efforts, but also that I have not tried very hard.

So then I pass on, for comfort, to the remembrance that I have also learnt to believe in God the Holy Spirit, "*Who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.*" Which means that I believe that it is His especial work to *make us holy*; not necessarily by definite stages that we can follow, but secretly and silently, as the fresh air purifies some diseased body, strengthening the power of resistance to poisonous forces, and quickening the work of restoration.

Our part in that work is simply to *make it possible.* We cannot follow the unseen processes whereby germs of disease are conquered, and life forces rallied, but we can hinder or help in these, according as we promote or obstruct the conditions essential to success.

This is what, it seems to me, is involved in our belief in God the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and Life-Giver," and to make the thought more real, and open my being to His purifying breath. I link with this clause that wonderful "Collect for Inspiration" at the beginning of the Holy Communion.[1]

Another valuable help towards realising this threefold relationship is to be found in those striking words in the Ordination Service, in which the candidates are bidden continually to pray "to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost."

You will find it a good plan to keep these words in mind, as a practical guide to your further efforts to make your own the living power stored up for us in our threefold relationship towards God. I will try and set before you a few of the main thoughts to be grasped, but only by way of suggestion.

[1] For fuller suggestions about this see chapter x.

You must think them out for yourself, in order to find the aspect under which *you* can best lay hold of them. For no two minds work on exactly the same lines.

(i) "*You will pray continually* TO *God the Father.*"

You must realise, therefore, the *personal Presence* of the God to whom you pray, and you can only hope to do this effectually by practising yourself in the recollection of it at other times as well. The "practice of the Presence of God" is the best training for prayer, and also the truest source of strength for the efforts of every day. As Bishop Lightfoot wrote, in words which I should like to ask you to commit to memory:

"Whatsoever is truthful, whatsoever is real, whatsoever is abiding in your life . . . you will find it here, and here alone, in the ever-present consciousness that you are living face to face with the Eternal God."

And that God is your *Father*. That seems an obvious thought, does it not? one which you have been familiar with from the days when you were taught to lisp your baby

prayers. Yet I think you will find it worth dwelling upon afresh, with the serious purpose of taking to yourself all the treasures of peace, and trust, and child-like confidence, and freedom from all care, which that word *Father* holds.

If you are indeed praying to a Father—or rather, if you have realised the fact—you can commit your prayers, yourself, and those you love, into His Hands without conditions or reserves, or any nervous dread lest His way of working should clash with your desires. For the Christian who has learnt the secret of effectual prayer—to quote Dr Lightfoot again, is he who "lays down at the footstool of God all his successes and all his failures, all his hopes and all his fears, all that he is and all that he might be, content to take up thence just that which God shall give him."

The God to whom you pray is your Father; that is one side of the thought; and the other is that this loving Father, who knows all your sorrows, your needs, and your desires,

is the almighty, infinite, eternal God, whose ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, and before whose glory even the angels bend in reverent awe. We need to realise the *majesty* of God as well as His Fatherhood.

You may fancy—I know one is apt to do so—that the element of *awe* militates against the freedom of our prayers; that it stiffens and restrains them, and robs them of their force. As a matter of fact nothing is further from the truth. The most reverent prayers are the most effectual, for in them the working of God's power is not hampered by our presumptuous efforts to dictate both His gifts and the manner of their giving.

Yes, you must cultivate a reverent *awe* of God—the "spirit of holy fear," as the old divines used to call it—if you want to enter into the full possibilities of effectual prayer. Study the Collect and Epistle, and the morning Lessons for Trinity Sunday, and with them the Trinity hymn—

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"—

the most perfect hymn in the language, Tennyson called it.

There are plenty of other passages about the glory and majesty of God, which you will find it well worth while to look out also; such as the 7th, 21st and 22nd chapters of the *Revelation*; the 10th chapter of *Ezekiel*, and that wonderful passage in *Exodus* xxiv. about the vision of God's glory granted to Moses and the elders of Israel.

(ii) "*By the mediation of our only Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

If you have let the *awe* of God the Father sink at all deeply into your soul, it will have brought with it a sense of utter unworthiness on your part, and of helpless inability to link your wayward longings, in any vital fashion, to His will. It will have made you realise, in fact, your need of a "mediator"—one who can do for you what you cannot do for yourself, by drawing you into living touch with the unseen God who sometimes seems so very far away.

It must be some one who understands your

human nature, and who is able also to transform its weakness into power, some one who can enter into the heart of your prayers, and can draw them into touch with the will of God. It must be some one, in fact, who is both human and divine; in other words, it must be the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Son of God," and also "Son of Man"—the "*Way*" as He has called Himself, whereby we who are weak and sinful can draw near to the eternal Majesty and awful purity of our heavenly Father.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the Man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for us all."—1 TIMOTHY ii.

"We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."—ROMANS vi.

"The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROMANS vi.

"*Through* Jesus Christ our Lord." If you want to master the Christian science of prayer, you must think over the familiar phrase, again and again, until it has come to represent to you an actual process belonging to the effort of prayer; a characteristic feature of that

effort, distinguishing it from every other form of mental activity.

"*Through* Jesus Christ." How can you pray, in any real sense, *through* Him? What difference is there between offering your prayers thus, or directly to God the Father? These are points to be clear about, and, as a help, let me advise you to make a careful study of those titles of the Lord Jesus, *Intercessor* and *Mediator*. Look up the references to them in the New Testament, and let your mind dwell upon the actual meaning of the words.

The *Intercessor*—one who actively moves and works between two parties, bearing messages, requests and responses which otherwise would never reach their destination. The *Mediator*, too—one who simply stands between the two sides, accessible to both, a link and a means of intercourse, bringing them into living touch one with another.

The Lord Jesus Christ is *Man*, so that we can turn to Him, and lean upon Him, and trust Him with our feeble prayers; He is

also *God*, so that those prayers are offered, through Him, to our heavenly Father.

You will have made a long step towards gaining real power in your prayers when you have learnt to offer them with the old petition :

> " Christ, present them !
> God, receive them ! "

You will have made still further progress when you can apply to your own use the appeal in Dr Bright's beautiful Communion hymn : [1]

> " Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
> And only look on us as found in Him."

What do the words *mean* to you ? Ask yourself the question, and go on asking it until you have found an answer which goes right home to your heart. The next verse of the hymn will help you :

> " And then for those, our dearest and our best,
> By this prevailing Presence we appeal. . . ."

Try to realise the *personal Presence* of the Lord Jesus. Remind yourself, when you kneel down to pray, that He is actually with

[1] " And now, O Father . . . " No. 322 in A. and M.

you, as He was with the disciples after His Resurrection, only that your eyes, as were theirs at times, are "holden, that they should not see Him." But He is *there*, all the while, and you can speak to Him.

It is terribly hard to put it into words! indeed, I think it is impossible. Only by practical endeavours—halting, it may be, at first, yet steadily persisted in—can you learn what it means to pray *to* God the *Father*, *through* God the Son. And in these endeavours you will seek, if you are wise, the help of God the Holy Spirit.

(iii) "*The heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost.*"

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. . . ."

". . . The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us. . . . And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit."—ROMANS v. and viii.

"The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things. . . ."

"... He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." — St John xiv. and xvi.

I suppose there is no part of our Faith which is harder to translate into terms of practical experience than our relationship with God the Holy Spirit. Yet it must be done if His "heavenly assistance" is to give life and strength to our prayers. I have only one or two helps to suggest.

I assume that you are already familiar with the various passages relating to the Holy Spirit and His work, which you will find scattered throughout the New Testament. To study and compare these is quite easy, with the aid of a Concordance or a reference Bible, and it is a most fruitful exercise. For it can hardly fail to bring home to one's mind something of the *reality* of the work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in our hearts and wills, enabling us to trust the love of God the Father, and to recognise the personal human presence of God the Son.

Study the different titles given to God the Holy Spirit in the Bible and Prayer-book;

especially the one which always seems to me the most illuminating of them all, setting Him before us the "Lord and Giver of life"—or "Life-Giver," as you doubtless know that the words should stand. By accustoming yourself to think of Him under this aspect of "Life-Giver," you will find it easier, I think, to gain a clear idea of the distinctive character of His work in renewing our wills, and our good intentions; in purifying thoughts and hearts, and restoring diseased, or paralysed, or blinded faculties of the mind by the *breath of life*.

You know how large a part fresh air plays in the modern scientific treatment of illness, and how the germs of disease are conquered, again and again, by the purifying, healing force which dwells in the "breath of Heaven." In just the same manner the thoughts and poisonous germs of evil which breed within our hearts can be overpowered by the breath of life with which the Holy Spirit is ready at all times to fill our being, if we will only suffer Him to have free scope.

That is *our* part in the matter; to try and open ourselves to His influence, and not to hinder it; and a very commonplace help which I think you will find useful here is the practice of *deep breathing*.

Prayer has been called the "respiration of the soul," and to link the act of prayer, now and then, with a deliberate effort to draw long, deep breaths helps one, I am certain, in two ways at once.

There are, first of all, the actual physical benefits of the process—the purifying of blood and brain, the stimulating of thought, the steadying of mind and will. These in themselves are effective aids to prayer, but far more valuable is the association of ideas which we can form for ourselves, if we choose, between this act of breathing and the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

There is no action, I think, which better symbolises the work of the Spirit than the deliberate effort to fill our lungs with pure air, even as we pray that our inmost being may be "*filled* with the Spirit." There is so

close a parallel between the two processes; in each the work is done silently and secretly, not by definite stages, but by a gradual transformation; in each the conquest of the forces of destruction is effected, not by the slow, hard process of uprooting, but by driving out death with life, and overwhelming what is poisonous with what is pure.[1]

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[1] Some practical hints on the subject of deep breathing will be found in Chapter x. under the head of " Exercises in Inspiration.

CHAPTER V

THE OFFERING OF PRAYER

"I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the Lord."—PSALM cxvi.

THE *offering* of prayer—that is the next thought I want to set before you, for here you touch the very heart of the secret of effectual prayer. When once we learn to look upon our prayers as efforts of heart and mind and will to be offered up to God, they gain a force undreamed of so long as we see in them only a means of getting God to do our will.

If you want help in grasping this thought, I can refer you to nothing better than the narrative given in each of the four Gospels—of the "mighty work" wrought by our Lord in the feeding of the five thousand. It is significant that this is the only miracle four times recorded; for whether or no it was for

this purpose that it was thus singled out, it certainly serves to shed a striking light upon the secret of power in prayer.

Think of it for a moment in this connection; the greatness of the need, the utter inadequacy of the means available to meet it, and then the Lord's own commands.

First, that the huge task of feeding that hungry multitude was to be undertaken by a few poor fishermen. "*They need not depart; give ye them to eat,*" was His answer to the disciples' urgent counsel that the crowd should be dismissed, to find food where they could. It was in vain that they demonstrated the impossibility of the task; in vain that they made their anxious reckoning of the needful provisions, so far beyond any means of theirs to pay for or procure. The command was not retracted: "Give *ye* them to eat."

What was there to give? Only a handful of loaves and fishes; a boy's meagre store, which he was willing to offer to the Lord, to do with as He would. And the offering was accepted.

"*Bring them hither to Me.*" That was the next command. The poor little offering—so pitifully inadequate when measured beside the need—must be placed in the Master's hands without reserve, in order that He might offer it to His Father in Heaven, to be blessed and given back, marvellously increased, to do the work for which He had accepted it. But that work had to be done in *His* way, according to *His* will.

"*Make the men sit down.*" The marshalling of the five thousand was carried out under the Master's orders, and it was from His hands that His workers received back portion after portion of the accepted offering, to be distributed among the hungry crowd till all were satisfied. And then came the final command, when the "mighty work" was accomplished, and the meagre store of help had been made more than sufficient for the tremendous need:

"*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*"

"Therefore they gathered them together," we are told, "and filled twelve baskets with

the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten."

Where could you find a more illuminating picture of the power of all prayer that is *offered*, humbly and truly, to God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord? It sets before us with wonderful clearness some of the chief truths we need to grasp.

(i)

First, the utter inadequacy of the offering we have to make. Our powers, and our desires, and the means at our command are just as hopelessly disproportioned to the claims upon them as was that scanty store to the multitude needing to be fed.

(ii)

Next—and this is the most important point of all—that what matters is not how much or how little we have to offer, but that the offering should be made *without reserve*. There must be no effort to keep a hold on it, or to secure some certainty of

repayment or return. An offering is not an investment; we must give up all claim upon the money, or time, or labour, or longings which we offer up to God.

(iii)

And they must be offered *through* our Lord Jesus; left deliberately in His hands, to be presented by Him to God the Father. We must leave it, too, to Him to decree just where and when our prayers shall do their work. He does not use them always just as we had planned, because so often He sees some better way beyond our dreams.

(iv)

And then there is the gathering up of the "fragments," that nothing be lost. This always seems to me to point us to a wonderful source of added power in prayer, which many of us leave wholly untried. For surely it suggests the possibility of prayers being made available for purposes unknown to those who offer them. I wonder if I can put into practical language what I mean.

You know that at all times there are some faithful souls engaged upon the work of offering up prayers for every kind of human need, and that not all of their intercessions are appropriated, so to speak, to individual claims. So you can "gather up," if you choose, some part of these by a deliberate effort of intention, into your own prayers for some person or object of your care. In this way you can reinforce, to a wonderful extent, your own small store of power in prayer; and you can also take your turn in providing the same help for others, by offering up sometimes—"over and above" your special petitions—a prayer or two for *any* who are sick, or sorry, or in danger. For thus you will be doing your part in adding to the store of strength for the disciples of the Lord to draw upon in their endeavours to respond to individual calls for help.

You can do this, as I said, at all times; but you will do it most effectually, by far, in touch with some act of united worship. For there you will find the greatest force of prayer with which to link your efforts.

It is best of all, of course, to be actually present at the service in which you mean to join; for there are both strength and inspiration to be gained from the "assembling of yourselves together" in a common cause. But if this is not possible, you can still strengthen your prayers to a wonderful extent, and widen their sphere of value, by linking them, in intention, with some act of worship somewhere being offered.

This is all a very imperfect outline of the lessons which this "mighty work" of our dear Lord's has to teach us as to the use which He can make of prayers offered humbly and whole-heartedly through Him to God the Father. You must work out your own thoughts on the subject, and apply them for yourself. The great point is that you should learn to feel that you can offer to God, in your daily prayers, your weakness as well as your strength, your poverty as well as your possessions, your fears no less than your desires.

You know how often you feel too tired,

or too ill or worried to pray effectually, or too much weighed down, perhaps, with some great care. You may feel that you can make no effort of any kind, but you can at least offer up to God your utter weakness. You can take courage from the thought of that poor little store from which thousands were to be fed—courage to give up reckoning the poverty of your own resources, and simply to offer them to God without reserve.

It is wonderful to find how one's prayers gain in power when one has laid hold of these four simple truths:

(1) That the surest way of making our prayers effectual is to make an offering of them for God to use.

(2) That this offering should be made *through* our Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) That our power of helping others depends *not* upon what we have to offer, but on the completeness with which we offer it.

(4) That *nothing* thus offered is wasted. Even if our prayers do not effect any end

that we can see, they may be " gathered up " into the intercessions of the Lord's disciples, " that nothing be lost."

Postscript.—On reading through these thoughts upon the offering of prayer, it occurs to me that you may be disturbed by the lack of reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. But this is simply because His work pervades it all. It is He Who breathes into us the " hearty desire to pray," and Who directs our prayers, and lends them force.

CHAPTER VI

DOORS

"When thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."—St Matthew vi.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."—Revelation iii.

I want to direct your attention next to two definite efforts of mind and will which have a wonderful power to increase the vitality of your prayers. I call them the opening and shutting of certain doors in one's being, for this suggests the idea of the two processes to be practised.

(i) *Shutting the Outer Door*

"*When thou hast shut Thy door,*" pray to thy Father which is in secret. Such is the preparation for prayer enjoined by our Lord Himself—the deliberate effort to shut out from your mind, for the time, all the clamour-

ing host of interests and duties, pleasures, plans and cares, which crowd our lives, and distract us with their claims. They have to be shut out before we can make sufficient silence in our hearts to hear God speak to us. It is only the worshipper who has banished other images from his mind who is able to realise the personal presences of his Lord—to

—" Gaze one moment on the Face whose beauty
Wakes the world's great hymn,
Feel it, one unutterable moment,
Bent in love o'er him;
In that look feel heaven, earth, men and angels
Distant grow, and dim;
In that look feel heaven, earth, men and angels
Nearer grow, through Him." [1]

I quote the lines in full, because they bring out a truth which you will find it immensely important to grasp with regard to this effort at " shutting out " the ordinary business of life from your prayer-time. That truth is that all the interests which you thus deliberately lay aside in order to draw near to God will have gained and not lost in value when you take them up again. You will

[1] Mrs Rundle Charles, " Songs Old and New."

have learnt to judge them more truly, and to use them more worthily, during that little pause of silent "waiting upon God." The more completely you allow the realisation of His Presence to banish, for the moment, all the ordinary issues of life, the more clearly will these stand out before you, in their true proportions, when you turn back to them.

"Yes, it is so indeed. All our interests in life, the highest and the lowest alike, abandoned, merged, forgotten in God's love, will come back to us with a distinctness, an intensity, a force unknown and unsuspected before. . . . Our affections, our friendships, our hopes, our business and our pleasure, our intellectual pursuits and our artistic tastes—all our cherished opportunities and all our fondest aims—must be brought to the sanctuary, and bathed in the glory of God's presence, that we may take them to us again, baptized and regenerate, purer, higher, more real, more abiding far than before." [1]

You need not be afraid, then, of sacrificing any interest, or of loosening any tie by this process of shutting the outer door of your mind, when you pray, upon every thought except the thought of God. You may not find it an easy matter at first. You may have

[1] Lightfoot, "Leaders in the Northern Church."

to do battle, again and again, with restless plans and purposes which *will* persist in forcing themselves upon you, to your distraction.

At such times, if you are wise, you will make use of the power of assertion. You will *say* to yourself, in your own words, that you *do* wish and intend, during these few minutes of prayer, to shut out all the ordinary affairs of life, and to shut yourself into the Presence of God. You want to draw as close to Him as possible; impress that thought upon your mind, and with it the companion thought that, for this little while, *nothing else matters*.

Use the power of association too, when you can, to help you here. When you enter a church, or a room, for the purpose of prayer, let the closing of the door suggest the shutting out of all distracting thoughts. If you do this a few times, deliberately, the association of ideas will gain force enough to act automatically, and you will find in this simple action a valuable reminder of one of the first essentials of effectual prayer—the absorption

of every other thought in the one overmastering consciousness of the Presence of God.

(ii) *Doors to be opened*

"*Behold*, I *stand at the door, and knock.*" If there is an outer door to be closed in heart and mind, to keep our prayers free from distractions, there are also inner doors to be opened, if we would not hinder the working of God's power within us. For it is we ourselves who limit the scope of our prayers by barriers of our own making, doors shut fast upon some corners of heart and life which we shrink from laying open to the unfettered working of God's will.

I expect you know, from your own experience, what it is to cherish some feeling or purpose which you are afraid that God may interfere with, if you submit it unreservedly to His will. So you begin your prayers, instinctively, by shutting it off from Him, and thus limiting the sphere of His work in you. It may be some longing which you feel you simply *cannot* give up; or some dread which you shrink from being forced to face; or some

harsh thoughts that you are harbouring in order to justify a certain line of action. Whatever it is that you fear to forfeit, the result is the same. You are shutting out God from that corner of your being, and in so far as you are doing this, you are limiting the power of your prayers.

Ah, yes!—perhaps you say—you know all this, only too well, but you cannot help it. There is one door in your heart which you *cannot* bring yourself to open unreservedly to God, try as you may. What is to happen then?

"*Behold*, I *stand at the door, and knock.*" If you cannot open the door, you can at least remind yourself that He Who craves an entrance is the Lord Who died for you, and Who loves you more dearly than any earthly friend can love, and desires for you always and only *the best.* If you cannot as yet bring yourself to open that closed door to Him, perhaps you can arrive at owning that it is not right to keep it closed against His love. You may not be able even to ask Him to open it for you; yet if you will only tell Him that you cannot

do this, although you know that it ought to be done, you will have come nearer than you know to accomplishing what seems impossible.

The next step is to try and resolve not to *hinder* God's work in the matter, even if you cannot *help*. When you can arrive at intending this, in all sincerity, the door will be opened for you. Very quietly, and sometimes very slowly too; for some doors are firmly closed, and it may be long before you realise what is happening. Yet all the while the gentle pressure is going on, unknown to you, perhaps, until suddenly you find that the door stands open, and the breath of life is purifying that dark corner of pride, or cowardice, or desire.

I cannot explain the psychology of the process, but I can promise you that you will find a very practical help in thus picturing to yourself the act of *opening the door* upon any part of your life in which you are afraid to trust God to work His unfettered will. You will find that old sores and grudges *do* disappear, and that disappointments lose their sting, and fears their power, when once you

can reach the point of resolving *not to hinder God* in doing what you cannot yet bring yourself to wish done.

(iii) *Praying in Fetters*

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."—St Mark xi.

I have classed together all those elements in life which we shrink from submitting to God's will as corners from which we are trying to shut Him out. But there is one group of feelings so specially destructive of all true power in prayer that I would suggest to you to consider them separately. I mean the whole range, great and small, of *unforgiven injuries*. In these—to carry on the same simile—you have not merely a secret place shut off from the purifying breath of "the Lord, the Life-Giver," but a prison in which you yourself are bound in chains.

Every unforgiving thought is a fetter weighing you down, and checking every effort of prayer. You can no more pray effectually

while you are hugging some wrong to be repaid, than you can work with chained hands. It is simply a question of incompatibility. Prayer and an unforgiving spirit *cannot* go together. Our Lord's counsel is an entirely practical one.

"*When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any.*"

It is entirely practical, but it is very far from being an easy counsel to obey. On the contrary, the effort to forgive some wrong done to you—*really* to forgive it, I mean, in the sense of putting it out of your mind—may sometimes be so hard as to seem impossible. What are you to do then?

What you must *not* do, clearly, is to give up praying until the effort is made and the wrong forgiven; for in prayer you make it possible for God to help you here. So I should say, pray on, but remember that so long as there is an unforgiving thought in your heart, your prayers cannot achieve their full effect. Make a definite effort, then and there, to offer up to God any grudge or resentment which still fetters you; and if you

feel that you *cannot* do this—that there is some slight, or wrong which you "owe it to yourself" to resent, or even punish—then turn your effort upon recognising at least the fact that you are praying in chains.

CHAPTER VII

FORMS OF PRAYER

"After this manner pray ye."—St Matthew vi.

"Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."—St Matthew vi.

Have you ever tried to make out the actual principle underlying the use of set forms of prayer? It is an effort worth the making, for a great measure of the disappointment we find in our prayers is due to our ignorance with regard to the use and abuse of forms. We make them into bonds, instead of using them as leading-strings, and then we protest against their constraint.

I want to suggest these two lines of thought for you to follow out with regard to forms of prayer—their use, and their abuse.

(i) *The Use of Forms*

First of all you should try to make out exactly what it is that you possess in a set

form of prayer, and also, incidentally, what it is *not*. It is *not*, for example, a charm or a spell, working its magic through the mere repetition of the words. It is not a substitute for effort on our part, but rather a stimulus and guide. A form of words fills the same part, in prayer, that a set exercise performs in other kinds of training. It is designed to call forth a certain series of efforts which experience has proved to be effectual for the end in view.

The novice in any field of endeavour is continually defeating his own ends by directing his force amiss. He is apt to overlook the true "centre of effort," and to focus his energies upon the wrong point. It happens so, again and again, in every kind of training, and our prayers are no exception. So we have recourse to set forms of words whereby to discipline and direct our thoughts and our desires.

A form of prayer, indeed, may fairly be defined as a scheme of spiritual endeavour. Which means that it has no inherent power in itself, but that its value is in proportion to our use of it.

Take, as an instance, one of the beautiful Collects at the end of our Communion Office, and try to analyse the series of efforts it directs.

"*Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom*" —the opening words call upon us to begin our prayer by recognising the power and wisdom of the God to Whom we speak. We are bidden to remind ourselves, before we enter upon the statement of our wants, that He knows "*our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking,*" so that we need not be afraid to trust Him with our fears and longings, whatever they may be. The more you think over the words, the greater depths of humble confidence will they disclose.

In that confidence we are led on to make our requests that this all-wise and all-powerful God shall "*have compassion on our infirmities,*" and give us, in His fatherly love, "*those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask.*"

One might translate the Collect into a

series of directions for an exercise in prayer after this fashion:

(1) Remember and acknowledge the power and wisdom of the God to Whom you pray.

(2) Impress upon your mind the thought of His perfect understanding of your needs.

(3) Try to desire that God's gifts to you shall not be limited by your "ignorance in asking," and that the manner in which your prayers are answered shall be determined by God's love rather than by your desires of the moment.

(4) Recall the relationship in which you stand to God the Father, through your union with God the Son, making this the ground of your personal appeal and trust.

Of course you lose here all the wonderful poetry of the words of the Collect, but I think that when you come back to these, you will find the appeal of their beauty all the stronger for being linked with a practical meaning.

Try the experiment of analysing other Collects in this way, not merely into different parts of their structure, but according to the various efforts of heart and will which they demand. Try to realise the attitude towards God implied, *e.g.* in your appeal to

Him as to One Who proves His boundless power "most chiefly in showing mercy and pity"—One Who is "always more ready to hear than we to pray," and Who has prepared for them that love Him "such good things as pass man's understanding."

If you were never to get beyond the openings of the Collects, you would have gained a great deal by the time you had learnt all that they have to teach about God. For the better you know and love Him, the better will you pray.

Learn, in fact, to look upon all forms of prayer in their true light, as exercises needing to be carefully practised if they are to be effectually performed. Take to heart Bishop Westcott's reminder that "real gain here, as elsewhere, is proportional to the effort made to secure it."

(ii) *The Misuse of Forms*

I have said that the value of set forms of prayer is in proportion to the practical use which we make of them by the actual exercise of the efforts they are intended to call

forth. In the same way, their danger lies in our mistaken readiness to employ them as a substitute rather than a guide to our own endeavours. To repeat a form of prayer by rote is to go through the actions of an exercise without putting force into them. We all know the uselessness of this where physical training is concerned, and it is just the same in spiritual matters. Again and again, when people rebel against the use of set forms of prayer, as mechanical, wearisome, and deadening to all true fervour, it is because they have fallen into the habit of using them amiss.

Forgive me for insisting upon an obvious truth, for it is just what is most obvious that we are often most apt to overlook in spiritual matters—to our own great loss!

Words are the moulds of thought, and unless you put something into a mould you will get nothing out of it. A form of prayer will be an empty thing until you fill it for yourself with earnest purpose. *Then* it will prove its worth by moulding that purpose into lasting power.

(iii) *Prayer and Prayers*

Granted that set forms of words have their use—their very great use—in concentrating our force in prayer, and directing it rightly, yet nobody who prays in earnest can be content to make *only* efforts devised by others. It is the same in our intercourse with God as with our human relationships. The nearer, and dearer, and more personal the tie becomes, the more impossible it is to limit our intercourse to formal modes of address.

Possibly the ultimate use of forms of prayer, as of exercises in music, athletics, etc., may be to train us to do without them, but this result is not to be attained in a day! Our wayward impulses, our indolence, our wilfulness and our impatience all need a long discipline of well-planned efforts, and I am certain that we make the best use of our times of prayer when we include in these some set forms of petition, worship, praise, to lead our thoughts out of the narrow range of our own hopes and fears. But I also

think that there should be always some personal, spontaneous intercourse between our souls and God.

(iv) *Prayer and Worship*

There is one more point to which I would direct your attention, in the matter of set forms of prayer, and that is the connection between our private prayers and public worship. We are far too apt, I think, to ignore this connection, and I am certain that in consequence we often lose more than we know.

The loss is on both sides. The services which we attend lack interest, and our own prayers fail in force, through not being linked one with the other.

You know how common a thing it is nowadays for professing Christians to give up "going to Church," because they find no satisfaction in the services, but only weariness. Also, they have "no time." Every week-day is filled to the utmost limit of its working hours; even Sundays bid fair to follow suit. Or, if a spare hour can here

or there be snatched, it is needed, quite desperately, as an interval of rest.

Now the things for which we have "no time," as I have already reminded you, are those which do not count for much in our lives. They take the last place in our scheme of duties and pleasures, and so they are in continual danger of being crowded out. There is never any doubt of a man's being able to "make time" for the profession which represents his livelihood; it is only when his profession as a Christian is in question that he finds it impossible to spare minutes enough to practice it seriously. He does not realise how heavy is the loss that he incurs, because it cannot be expressed in pounds, shillings and pence.

If you compare the Christian profession with the profession to which the Church teaches us to liken it—that of a soldier—you may find it easier to realise the connection between private prayers and public worship. The one represents our individual practice; the other, our combined exercises, efforts and attacks. A man cannot learn to be a soldier

on the battlefield, or even in manœuvres; neither will he get on very far if all his training is carried on in solitude; and it is just the same in spiritual matters. If you want to be an effectual follower of the Lord Jesus, you must *develop* your faculties in private prayer, and *exercise* them in public worship.

You will find that your daily prayers gain fresh point and purpose from being made the practising-ground for Sunday services, while it is simply amazing to find what new depths of joy and interest are brought out in these latter by a little serious preparation. As Bishop Westcott cautioned his congregations, in words that deserve to be taken deeply to heart:

"*Fixed formularies are likely to be used mechanically unless quiet meditation prepares for the use of them.*"

I should like to ask you to consider carefully a few more sentences from the same document —a letter addressed one Lent to the "clergy and laity of the diocese of Durham." [1]

[1] Published in "Christian Aspects of Life."

May I not say with truth that the want of serious preparation for public worship robs our services of their proper energy and warmth—widely different from personal emotion—which spring from the sense of a corporate life? Many recognise that public worship is a duty, but few, it is to be feared, look to it as their highest privilege; few realise the awful majesty of the solemn gathering; few feel when they take their place in the congregation that (in the words of a great teacher) "no other assembly in the world is so august." Those who come together look rather to obtaining personal benefits than to offering worship to God, to receiving rather than to giving; and, even so, they make for the most part no adequate effort to gain the moral attitude which befits the expectation of a blessing.

Such a temper necessarily affects the whole character of the service, and is utterly alien from the spirit of our Offices. In these two thoughts are dominant; the thought of the majesty of God, and the thought of the manifold wants of our fellow-men with whom we are united; the thoughts, that is, of praise and of sympathy. The thought of self falls entirely into the background.

(v) *Summary*

These questions of the use and misuse of forms are of such vital importance to the true effectiveness of our prayers that you may find it useful to gather up the thoughts I have suggested here into a few brief, practical counsels.

(1) Learn to look upon every set form of prayer as a scheme of efforts to be made, and *use it as such.*

(2) In order that you may do this effectively try to analyse each form of prayer that you use, with the purpose of making clear not merely the parts into which it can be divided, but the actual efforts of heart and mind and will which it calls upon you to make.

(3) Keep yourself constantly reminded of the fact that a form of words mechanically repeated is not only powerless for good, but also actively harmful. For every "vain repetition" makes it harder to pray well next time.

(4) Let your private prayers *begin* with the use of a few set forms, to exercise your will on the right lines, and bring your mind into the right attitude; but let them also include some direct, spontaneous and personal intercourse between your soul and God.

(5) Try to link together, in every way that you can, the efforts of private prayer with the fellowship of public worship.

Learn both to lean upon the prayers of your fellow worshippers, and also to try and contribute your little share of force. And, that you may the better do this, use your home prayers to practise for the Church services.

(6) Lay to heart the counsel already quoted:

"Real gain, here as elsewhere, is proportional to the effort made to secure it."

CHAPTER VIII

INTERCESSION

"Brethren, pray for us!"—1 Thessalonians v.

"I beg of you, I beg of you, my brothers!
I ask an alms to-day.
I am standing at your doorstep, as a beggar
Who will not be turned away;
And the charity you give my soul shall be—
Pray for me!

A. A. Procter.

I am not going to attempt to go through all the many different efforts and activities summed up in the word *prayer*; I could not possibly deal with them all. But I do want to try and pass on to you such glimpses as I myself have succeeded in gaining into the main principles underlying the great work of *intercession*. For I think there is no other branch of prayer in which we are so apt to lose power through lack of understanding.

"*Pray for us!*"

"*Remember me in your prayers.*"

"*The prayers of the congregation are asked on behalf of* . . ." a long list of sick and suffering, it may be, whose very names are unknown to us. What is it, actually, that is desired of us in these appeals? How are we to respond to them?

These are questions needing to be asked and answered clearly, if we are to learn the secret of effectual prayer. Possibly you have already done this; if so, you will know from experience what a wonderful new world of possibilities is opened out to you in prayer, when once you have grasped the vital principle of intercession. But if this is still unfamiliar to you, let me advise you to lose no time in trying to find it out. The best way that I know of is to give careful thought to the following points, one by one:—

(i) *The actual meaning of the word "Intercession"*

An *intercessor*, we all know, in the literal sense of the word, is one who *goes between* two parties. In what manner can we profitably "go between" another soul and its God?

The best way of arriving at a clear understanding about this is, I am quite sure, to try and realise the work of intercession being carried on at every moment by God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So let me recommend you to take these points next.

(ii) *The Intercession of the Lord Jesus*

We are told that He "ever liveth to make intercession for us."[1] What do we mean by this?

Not that He is gaining for us, from God the Father, graces, or gifts, or mercies which otherwise would be withheld; you cannot be too clear about this. Our heavenly Father has "prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding"; He is "always more ready to hear than we to pray"; He knows our needs and longings "before we ask, and our ignorance in asking." There is no unwillingness on His side to give all that is best for us and for those we love; it is *we* who "for our unworthiness dare not, and for our blindness cannot" stretch out our

[1] Hebrews vii.

hands to grasp the good things He is waiting to bestow.

But this loving Father sent His son into the world, "to take our nature upon Him," so that He could offer up, as Man, our human prayers. It is such a help to try and think of our dear Lord Jesus taking our poor, weak petitions—always faulty, and often so mistaken—and presenting them to the Father, all transformed by His knowledge and His love. Our prayers, as we offer them, are for the things we think we want; as presented to God the Father by God the Son, those prayers will be for the things He knows we need. As our Intercessor He prays for the blessings we are too ignorant and foolish—or too cowardly, it may be—to pray for on our own behalf. As our Intercessor He separates the little heart of truth in our prayers from all that is unworthy, and offers it to God the Father, to be blessed and used in the way He sees to be the *best*.

I expect you remember the striking account which St Augustine gives, in his "Confessions," of his mother's passionate prayers that

he might be hindered from going away to Rome, with all its dangers.

"But Thou, mysteriously counselling, and hearing the real purpose of her desire, granted not what she then asked, in order to make me what she was ever asking. . . . She loved to have me with her, and knew not what joy Thou wert preparing for her by my absence."

The prayers were offered, humbly and faithfully, *through* the Lord Jesus, and so they accomplished her deepest longings, although in ways beyond her dreams.

If you want to learn to pray effectually for others, you must try to enter as deeply as you can into the meaning of our Lord Jesus Christ's work of *intercession.*

(iii) *The Intercession of the Holy Spirit*

I have touched on this already.[1] I only want you to let your thoughts dwell upon it, now, as the complement of the intercession of the Lord Jesus. Or perhaps it would be truer to speak of it as the preparation for this. For just as it is the work of God the Son to transform our prayers *after* they are offered,

[1] Pp. 55-58.

so it belongs to God the Holy Spirit to shape them *beforehand.*

We "know not what to pray for as we ought"; [1] we are not even always willing to call upon the Lord Jesus to help us here; and so our heavenly Father has sent His Holy Spirit to "help our infirmities," by influencing our wills, guiding our petitions, and directing our hearts "into the love of God." [2]

You should read that wonderful 8th chapter of *Romans* over and over again, looking out the various references to other passages about this work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and using these to help you in realising a little more of all that His intercession is and might be to us.

(iv) *Our Intercession for one another*

When we have realised, by the help of the Holy Spirit, something, at any rate, of all that is gathered up in the thought of our Lord Jesus Christ's intercession for us, we can begin to enter into the possibilities of our own intercession, one for another. Not other-

[1] Romans viii. [2] 2 Thessalonians iii.

wise; of this I am sure. In no part of our spiritual life is it more true than in our efforts to pray for others, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."[1] So that if you should feel that your ideas about intercession are vague and lifeless, my advice would be to take it as a sign that you have not yet gained a firm enough hold upon the thought of Christ's intercession for you.

But I assume, now, that you *have* grasped this as a living reality, and that you have found a personal meaning in the wonderful assurance that *He ever liveth to make intercession for us.* The next question is, how this can be brought to bear upon your own endeavours to pray effectually on behalf of others.

There seem to be two ways in which we can do this. We can pray *with* our fellow-Christians, linking our prayers with theirs—*spiritually,* I mean, for continents may separate us in space—with the deliberate purpose of adding our strength to theirs in

[1] 1 Corinthians iii.

the offering up of their petitions. Or we can offer these in their stead, striving to make on their behalf the effort they cannot or will not make for themselves to appropriate the special grace or blessing which God has ready, at that moment, to meet their need. This is what praying *for* others should mean to you, and not any effort to "persuade God."

I don't know whether I make the distinction clear; you will find it strikingly brought out in the words in which Bishop Westcott asked for the prayers of the congregation gathered together in Durham Cathedral on the occasion of his enthronement.

"But what is this prayer for which I ask? It is not the self-willed importunity of him who thinks that he shall be heard for his much speaking. It is not the opening to God of thoughts which His love has not anticipated. It is not the pleading of our personal wishes as isolated objects of divine favour. Nay, rather, it is the humblest, tenderest, most unquestioning expression of our dependence; the confession of our wants and weaknesses, as we have felt them; the firmest resolution to rest in God's will, and to make His will our own; the energy of a spiritual communion by which we realise our own well-being in the well-

being of others; the endeavour to quicken and chasten and hallow every prompting of duty by the light of Heaven." [1]

(v) *Fellowship in Intercession*

Those who ask for prayer to be offered on their behalf should be ready to pray for others in their turn. This is where the *fellowship* of intercession comes in, and a wonderful source of power it is to those who have made it a reality in their lives.

We all have our hours of weakness and our hours of strength. There are times when we can make our definite offering of prayer in the place of those who cannot pray for themselves; there are also times when it is we who have to depend upon the prayers of others. We need to realise both sides of the fellowship if we are to practise either effectually. The more whole-heartedly you pray for others when you have the strength, the better able will you be to use their prayers when you yourself are crushed into powerlessness by some load of sorrow, or pain, or care.

For those who ask for the prayers of others

[1] "The Incarnation and Common Life."

ought to try and *use* them; that is another point, and one all too often overlooked. Especially when the prayers of a congregation are asked at some one service, I think that those who request the boon should be ready to receive it. I think they should watch for the time when they know that the prayers are being offered, and lift up their hearts in unison with these, so far as they are able. Or, if they are too suffering, or too weak for this, they can at least rest in the knowledge that others are praying in their stead, and hold themselves ready, in stillness and expectation, to appropriate the strengthening and healing power which that force of intercession is bringing to bear upon their needs.

I always find it helpful to compare the action of intercessory prayer with that of a lens, or burning-glass, placed between the sun's rays and the object on which they are to be focussed. The glass does not stimulate the power of the sun, or add a single one to the rays continually given off in all directions. What it does is simply to focus the greatest

possible force of those rays upon a special spot, even as prayer concentrates upon some individual need the power of the love of God.

It is only a partial simile, of course; I doubt if any complete one can be found for this deep mystery of intercession. We can never hope to *understand* it, in any final sense; all we can do is to catch a glimpse, here and there, of the working of our intercessions, and trust them unreservedly to God. I should like to give you one short passage from Bishop Westcott's "Lessons from Work," to sum up the whole matter—

"We do not indeed care to inquire how prayer affects the will of God. It is enough for us to know that our God is a God Who, seen under the conditions of human life, answers prayer. . . . It is not for us to prescribe—it is not for us to know the seasons which answer to the fitting accomplishment of the Father's purpose. We pray according to our most imperfect sight. We trust our prayers to the absolute love of God, sure at least of this, that no effort will be lost which is consecrated to Him."

CHAPTER IX

THE COST OF PRAYER

"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?"—St Matthew xx.

"For it cost more to redeem their souls."—Psalm xlix. (Pr. Bk. version).

"Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."—2 Samuel xxiv.

The *cost* of a prayer—have you ever taken that into account? If not, let me commend it to you as another point well worth thinking over. For again and again the reason why our prayers fail is simply this, that we are unable or unwilling to pay the price of our desires.

One of the most valuable truths to lay hold of, if you would be spared continual disappointment when you pray, is that *prayer is not magic.* The wonders which it works are not the easy consequence of a spell or charm, but the fruits of steadfast, strenuous, often *agonised* endeavours, proportioned,

both in force and in continuance, to the work that has to be done. Very often we have no means of measuring that work beforehand. We know what we want to achieve, but not what stumbling-blocks may lie in the way. Again and again the true answer to our prayers is: "*Ye know not what ye ask.*"

We demand a miracle, and expect to accomplish it with a wish. We ask that a soul shall be turned to God, or a subtle evil frustrated, or a great danger averted, or a tremendous triumph won; and then we assume that our part is done, and look for the result. And if nothing happens, we complain that prayer is useless, or, at least, that *our* prayers have not been answered. It does not occur to us that we on our side have an answer to give to the question, *Are ye able* to do your part?

The results you look for may demand a long, hard strain of effort, and sacrifice, and even suffering for their achievement; are you prepared for this? You dream of doing Christ's works of power; are you willing to pay the price He paid, of utter self-surrender?

"*Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of . . .?*"

When you start praying for some definite result, look upon it as a serious piece of work to be done; a work, too, of which you do not know all the conditions, or see all the difficulties; so that you cannot count beforehand the cost of carrying it through. But God knows, and He will use to the utmost all the force of love and desire and steadfast purpose which you offer to Him in prayer.

Only, it must be *real* force, exerted just as much in earnest as if you were setting out to move a heavy weight. You may find it useful, indeed, to remind yourself of some familiar laws of ordinary dynamics, and apply them to the exercise of spiritual force.

Take, for instance, that fundamental principle of mechanics, that a given amount of work to be done requires an equivalent measure of force, whether this be applied in one great effort, or in many lesser ones. You know that the scientific application of force does not lessen the amount that is

needed—a 10-lb. weight must always have a force of over 10 lbs. to move it—but it *does* save the wasting of our energies through misdirection. Also, it enables us to move our weight by a force, say, of 2 lbs. working through 6 feet of distance, or 6 seconds of time, instead of employing one of 12 lbs. exerted through one foot, or one second only.

Here you have the principle of the pulley, the oar, and every other kind of lever; the basis, too, of hundreds of modern marvels wrought by mechanical science. And here you have also a practical clue to some, at any rate, of the mysteries of effectual prayer. Only that in prayer you have no mere centre of forces, or storehouse of power, but a *Person* into Whose loving Hands we can safely entrust our efforts, to be gathered up, and used, and directed in the best way for achieving the best result.

One of the secrets of prevailing prayer is to go on praying quite steadily, quite confidently and quite simply, day after day; offering our efforts, such as they are, to God, for Him to store and to use as He sees fit.

You may have to go on for a long while without visible result; that only means that the work is not yet complete. *The* point to realise is that the prayers which you offer in this way *are never lost.*

You may not go on praying long enough to accomplish your desire; patience and perseverance are not easy virtues to practise, and we are all liable to fail in both, continually. We fetter God's power again and again, and limit the manner of His working. But every prayer that we do succeed in offering up to Him, in simple trustfulness, He will use in the very best way possible, even though it may be a way which looks long and hopeless to our short sight.

It all comes back to the old, hackneyed truths, that God *knows* best, and *loves* best, and that we do not trust Him fully enough. Try to impress these thoughts upon your mind again, and again, and yet again. You *cannot* dwell upon them too often, or too long.

Try to remember that God sees all the conditions of success unknown to you—the measure of force needed, the obstacles hindering its effect. He knows beforehand the cost of each passionate petition, so that when these seem to fail, the Christian who has learnt to trust Him will be content to wait until

> ". . . . death touch his eyes,
> And show God granted most, denying all." [1]

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[1] Browning, "Ferishtah's Fancies."

SECOND PART

PRACTICE

CHAPTER X

EXERCISES

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."—ISAIAH XXVIII.

WE have been dealing, so far, with the *theory* of this Christian science of prayer—the conditions making for success or failure, the truths to be taken into account. The next step, obviously, is to translate theory into practice, by applying these truths to our daily prayers. How can this best be done?

First, I think, by practising singly the various efforts involved in the simplest act of prayer; and then by combining them into more complex exercises of force, planned for the achievement of definite results. Such exercises you have already within your reach, and in as great number and variety as you can wish, in the many manuals published, of forms of prayer for every possible occasion.

I will add the names of a few of these, in case you may find it useful.[1] But they all belong to a fairly advanced stage in practice, not to be mastered without previous training.

We all recognise the poor results to be looked for in other lines of endeavour if we attempt to practise in combination efforts which we have not mastered one by one. We accept the necessity of working at finger-exercises on the piano, or "pot-hooks" in writing; and the principle holds good in our prayers. We need to train ourselves in the separate efforts involved, if we would escape the fretting sense of failure which is bound to follow upon the attempt to practise feats beyond our power.

Now it is with this first stage in the practice of prayer—and with this only—that I can hope to help you, by suggesting a few elementary exercises of thought and will. For the sake of clearness I have grouped them according to the different parts which they are meant to play in our prayer-training.

[1] See Appendix.

1. Preparatory Exercises

There is no surer way of distinguishing between scientific and unscientific methods of working than by the amount of care expended in preparation. The untrained worker plunges headlong into his task, impatient of delay. The expert knows that time is not wasted which is spent in securing the right conditions of effort.

It is just the same with prayer. I think it was Bishop Wilkinson (of St Andrew's) who used to say that if one had only three minutes to spend in prayer, it was worth while to let two of them be occupied in realising the Presence and Power of God, and His unfailing love. There is no doubt that our daily prayers acquire new force when once we have formed the habit of beginning them with some definite efforts of preparation, such as the following.

(i)

First of all, try to grasp the two thoughts, that prayer is a definite work to be done,

and that it is *worth doing*. For a form of exercise in this I know of nothing better than those familiar words in the 11th chapter of *Hebrews:*

"He that cometh to God must believe that *He is*, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Say these words to yourself, over and over again, with concentrated attention, and apply them to your own practice. Make use here, as elsewhere, of the valuable power of *assertion*. Affirm quite definitely, in words, that you *are* trying to draw near to God in prayer, and that you *do* believe that He is a living, loving Father, waiting to receive your prayers, and to reward them. You should dwell specially upon this point, seeking to impress upon your mind the thought that it *does* matter whether you pray or not —that your prayers, if sincerely offered, *will* make a difference.

Believe me, you will never regret the time or pains you spend in trying to realise the fundamental fact that prayer is an effort worth the making. The motto of the monks

of old needs reversing in these days, so that it may stand: *Orare est laborare.*

(ii)

The worth of our prayers depends upon the relationship in which we stand towards God, so you will do well to reassert this, as your next act of preparation. You can use for this purpose the Catechism summary of our belief in God, to the use of which I have already drawn your attention.[1] Use this as an exercise, not merely repeating, but affirming it, clause by clause, as the expression of the beliefs which give you power to pray. You will find it best to *stand* to recite it, making a slight pause before each of the three assertions, to draw in a deep breath to clear and concentrate your thoughts.

2. Exercises in Inspiration

I don't want to repeat the suggestions I have already made upon the important subject of *deep breathing*,[2] but I should like

[1] See pp. 43-46.

[1] See pp. 57-59.

to set before you three special exercises which I have found it helpful to use, either alternately or in combination, as a preparation for prayer. I have classed them together as "Exercises in Inspiration," the object of all three being to enable one to make a fuller use of the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the breath of life.

(i)

The first of these exercises, and the shortest, I should advise you to practise daily, as one of the opening acts of your morning prayers. The *form* is familiar to you already, being simply the short "Collect for Inspiration" at the opening of our Communion Office. It offers a rich store of help to those who will only *use* it, and the best way of learning to do this is to practise it systematically, until each clause comes to be associated with a definite effort to be made in your approach to God.

First, you are bidden to speak to Him personally, as to One Who sees and knows *all* concerning you—your outward circum-

stances, and also your inmost thoughts—One "unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid."

You are called upon to make a sincere effort to realise what it means to be in the Presence of this all-powerful and all-seeing God, before you go on to desire that He shall *cleanse* the thoughts of your heart by the in-breathing, or "inspiration" of His Holy Spirit. The petition implies an exercise of will on your part, to open yourself to that in-breathing, so that every corner of your being may be *filled* with the breath of life, and everything that checks its action may be driven out.

You will find that it helps you here if you draw in a long, deep breath while you *pray* the words: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit." It enables you to realise that the power of the Holy Spirit is being breathed into you there and then, and also that you have your part to play, in opening your whole being to that power, and banishing all that hinders it.

Then you go on to the next effort, which is to apply this cleansing power to its true purpose of enabling you to love God better, and so to worship Him with truer reverence. And, finally, you are directed to end the prayer with the intention of offering it to God the Father *through* Jesus Christ, our divine Lord and human Friend.[1]

(ii)

The next exercise is based on the nine "fruits of the Spirit" enumerated by St Paul in his letter to the Galatian Christians.

> "The fruit of the Spirit is—
> Love, joy, peace,
> Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness,
> Faith, meekness, temperance."

I have divided them into these three groups, as representing the leading characteristics of (1) the state of mind, (2) the conduct towards others, and (3) the manner of life of the Christian whose heart and mind are opened to the in-breathing of the Holy Spirit. The classification is a rough one, but it may help

[1] See pp. 51-55.

you to remember the nine "fruits," and if you have not time to fix your thoughts upon each singly (though this is by far the most effective plan) you can think of them thus, in groups.

You must never forget that they are, emphatically, *fruits* grown, not made; the outward product of a vital force working secretly within. They can no more be formed artificially than can the apples which ripen on our trees as a recurring miracle. You cannot counterfeit natural growth, but you can hasten or retard it.

Bear that thought in mind when you prepare to practise this exercise—also standing, and near an open window, if possible, so that you may gain the added help of purer air. Try to desire, as earnestly as you can, to be "*filled* with the Spirit," even as your lungs are filled with fresh air. Draw in a deep breath as you fix your mind upon that "filling," and the separate fruits which you desire that it shall foster within you.

Say to yourself, in words, that you *do* want the power of the Holy Spirit to fill your life,

and to develop in you, first, the fruit of *love*—or the fruits of *love*, *joy*, and *peace*, according as you let your thoughts dwell upon them singly or in groups.

Hold your breath for a moment, while you dwell upon the characteristic aspects which these fruits should bear—the kindness of thought, for example, towards even those who hurt you; the readiness to recognise causes of rejoicing; the calm serenity in face of trouble. Try to recall also any obstructions which you yourself may be setting in the way of the full development of these fruits—any grievances, or cares, or personal schemes which you find it hard to put aside—and as you exhale your breath, make an effort to *desire*, at any rate, the expulsion of everything in you that may be hindering the work of the Spirit.

It all sounds very lengthy when one tries to explain it, but the exercise need only take three minutes (although it is well worth more time, if you can spare it). And when you have practised it regularly for a little

while, with earnest purpose, you will begin to be conscious of its effect. You will find that the "power of the Spirit" is becoming more real to you, and that you are growing more and more earnest in your efforts to give that power free course, and to reap its "fruits."

These are not formed in a day, and you may still be cherishing conditions adverse to their growth. But these will be banished in time, if you are willing to let them go. Quite suddenly, perhaps, you will realise that some old grudge has lost its power, or that some worry no longer frets you as it used, or that stabs to your pride make a far slighter wound than formerly. The perfect ripening of the fruits may be yet a long way off, but when once you realise that the work *is* going on, you gain a fresh incentive in trying to do your part.

(iii)

The companion exercise which I suggest is the familiar "*Veni, Creator*," to be used in much the same way.

Divide the hymn into its rightful three parts of six lines each, as the three stages of your exercise.

(1) The endeavour to welcome the life-giving Presence of the Holy Spirit, and to recognise His power, and the wonders He can work :

> " Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
> And lighten with celestial fire.
> Thou the anointing Spirit art,
> Who dost our sevenfold gifts impart.
> Thy blessed unction from above
> Is comfort, life, and fire of love."

(2) The personal appeal to God the Holy Spirit to enrich your life with the three great gifts of insight, purity, and peace :

> " Enable with perpetual light
> The dulness of our blinded sight.
> Anoint and cheer our soiléd face
> With the abundance of Thy grace.
> Keep far our foes, give peace at home ;
> Where Thou art Guide no ill can come."

(3) The further and higher effort to gain, through the Holy Spirit's influence, a deeper insight into the mystery of the " Three Persons in one God " :

"Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of both, to be but One,
That, through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song;
Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

You have here, as in the last exercise, either three divisions or nine, according as you practise it in stanzas or in couplets. Make your own scheme, and practise it as a series of definite efforts to absorb into yourself the fullest possible measure of the Holy Spirit's power, drawing a deep breath between each of your divisions, as an aid to concentration.

3. Exercises of Will

A vital factor in effectual prayer, and one that we are strangely apt to overlook, is the power of the *will*—that mysterious, determining faculty which enables us to call into action our forces of body, mind, and spirit, so as to exert them in a definite direction, and continue the exertion after it has grown hard. Without the stimulating and controlling force of the will our powers are weakened through inaction, or wasted by random use.

This is the case in prayer, as in every other undertaking, so that if you want to learn to pray effectually, you will do well to set yourself deliberately to cultivate your power of will. The following hints may help you in this; you can expand them for yourself into the form of exercises.

(i)

Practise yourself in making a definite *act of will*, picturing it as a mental process whereby you gather up all the forces of your being, and concentrate them upon the effort of the moment. Try to think of this as *the one thing that matters*, whilst you are doing it.

You can practise this over the ordinary efforts and tasks of daily life, which one falls into the habit of performing mechanically and without thought. Try sometimes to concentrate your whole energies upon the exact performance of the very simplest routine. It all helps to strengthen your will for more important work.

You will find it specially useful to exercise your will in connection with the practice of

deep breathing. Fix your attention upon trying to see how deeply you can draw your breath, and how slowly you can exhale it. This will help you in two ways at once.

(ii)

In addition to these general efforts at *exercising* your will, you should learn to *apply* it also to special endeavours connected with your prayers. Foremost among these, perhaps, in importance is the control of your thoughts. You know how surprisingly apt they are to wander when you pray, and how useless your efforts to control them sometimes seem to be.

Yet control of thought *must* be gained if your prayers are to be a source of power and not of weariness, and you will have taken one step in the right direction when you find out how small a measure of control you have as yet achieved. For then at least you will see more clearly what you have to do.

You need to *exercise* the sovereignty of your will, and to do this you must *assert* it. Say to yourself, when you prepare to pray—

or, better still, say it, in words, to God—that you *do* will to keep your thoughts concentrated upon your prayers, and that if they wander, it shall not be with your consent.

The effect of such assertions you will find to be twofold. They will serve to strengthen your power of control, and will also make you more alive to every lapse in this. Your thoughts will not be able to drift so far as they sometimes do without your realising it. And the perpetual effort at calling them back and focussing them afresh, although most tiresome, will be richly rewarded as you find the checks less frequent, and the control more complete.

A suggestion which my own experience leads me to offer is that you should make a practice, *for a time*, of getting up from your knees directly you find that your attention has wandered, and *standing*, for a second, to make a fresh effort of will before you kneel down to begin the prayer again. This would, of course, be far too fidgetting a plan to follow always, but I have found it a most valuable

cure for inattention to practise it now and again.

It is always well, I think, to break off in the middle of a prayer when you become conscious that your thoughts have wandered, and to begin it afresh with more concentrated attention. Even if you have to do this several times with one prayer, it is better worth while to have *prayed* that one effectually when you rise from your knees, than to have repeated half a dozen without thought.

(iii)

The way to exercise your will effectively during the actual moment of prayer is to set it in the right direction beforehand. In other words, to practise *intention* as well as *concentration*.

You know how important a part our *intention* plays, in all our actions, in determining both their character and their worth. Again and again, even in human judgment, the praise or blame of an act is awarded according to what was intended rather than what resulted from it, and in God's sight I expect it

is always so. In our intentions, therefore, we have always something that we can offer up to God.

Think this out carefully—it is well worth it!—and try to apply it to your prayers. *Say* to yourself, with all the force you can muster, in some such words as these:

"I *do* intend to make my prayers a real approach to God. I *do* intend to lift up my heart to Him, and to draw His love down upon myself and those for whom I pray. I intend *not* to let my thoughts wander, and if they do so, it shall at least not be with my consent."

You can go further, if you choose, setting beforehand some definite aim for your prayers, or some work to be helped forward, as the *intention* with which they shall be offered. You will have made a real advance in the science of prayer when you have learnt to use familiar forms with the special intention of benefiting some individual, or of meeting some definite need. You will find it a good beginning to try and impress upon your mind these three thoughts:

(1) That the more definite your intention is in your prayers, the easier will you find it to pray effectually.

(2) That by exercising your will in intention you can offer to God, beforehand, the time you are preparing to spend in prayer.

(3) That in this way you increase the value of such time immeasurably, since all that we truly offer to God He blesses and renders fruitful.

4. Learning to Rest

It seems a contradiction in terms to speak of *exercises* in connection with *rest*, yet I am quite sure that most of us need to cultivate deliberately the power of resting. We have to learn not only to make efforts, but also to cease from making them; to let God do His part *in* us as well as *for* us. We have to train ourselves to "let go" as well as to hold fast, and this is all so contrary to our usual methods in these hurrying days, that with most of us, it needs to be learnt. To "rest in the Lord" sounds so enviable, and so simple, too; yet it is often the very last thing we are able or inclined to do.

I have seen it said somewhere that there can be no rest in prayer unless there has been effort. I think one might say with equal force that effort in prayer has not fulfilled its object unless it has enabled us also to *rest*.

How can this rest be learned ?

(i)

The first step is, I think, to accustom yourself to making a short pause, at the end of every time of prayer, while you deliberately try to relax all effort and to realise the fact that God is working in you and for you. Say to yourself that you have done your part in this act of prayer—very imperfectly, it may be—and that it is for God now to do His. Pause a moment to impress upon your mind the thought that He is doing it—there and then, even as you wait—and try to rest in this thought. Make yourself passive and receptive in His Hands, if it be only for a moment; it will help you to remember that the great works wrought by prayer are not all of *our* doing, or effected by our force of will.

Let those words of our Lord's echo and re-echo in your mind:

"My Father worketh even until now, and I work."[1]

In the thought of God's work you will find your own rest.

(ii)

Read carefully the 4th chapter of *Hebrews*, and think over all that is written there on the subject of "*entering into*" rest. This surely points to the need of making special efforts for the purpose; and such efforts as we are called upon to make in what is known as the practice of *meditation*. The word itself has a forbidding sound to some ears, suggestive of formal schemes of mental efforts beyond our powers; yet, as a matter of fact, it only means that "practice of the Presence of God" which must of necessity underlie all intercourse with Him.

It is surely not much to claim that *at least* five minutes should be devoted to this practice every day. Try to make a rule of this for a

[1] St John v.

short time—say a week, to begin with. Set aside your five or ten minutes, and try to spend every second of them in serious endeavours to realise the Presence and Power and Love of God, and to trust yourself to Him without reserve. The more earnest your efforts are, the more speedily will you recognise the value of definite exercises. I shall not attempt to offer you any such, but will rather refer you to those already worked out by experts.[1]

(iii)

It is worth taking pains, also, to be clear as to the nature of the rest to be aimed at, and for this I would refer you again to that 4th chapter of *Hebrews*:

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest. . . ."

There you have the characteristic feature of true rest of heart and mind—not that you should cease working, but that you should

[1] See Appendix.

cease from *your own* work, by making it *God's*, and laying upon Him the responsibility of its issues—

—"He loves the burden."

The wearing part of work lies not in the making of efforts—which indeed invigorates us—but in the uncertainty of result. To offer our endeavours up to God, and then to leave them in His hands, is to "cease from our own work," as God ceased from His on the symbolic day of rest. I have read somewhere that one of the ancient words for the Sabbath meant the "rest day of the heart." That is what you and I need; to rest our *hearts* on God; to learn of the Lord Jesus how to "find rest unto our souls."

And this we can only hope to arrive at by constant, serious practice in the effort of "drawing near" to Him—so near that we can cast upon Him the burden of our cares.

(iv)

Here are one or two practical suggestions which may help you in learning to rest.

(1) Always try to begin your "rest-

practice" by relaxing the muscles of your body, and the tension of your mind. The mere effort which this requires will often serve to show the strain in which you are living.

(2) This relaxing of muscles means giving yourself up entirely to the support of the couch or chair on which you rest; as you do this, try to call up the thought of "leaning hard" upon God, so that you *feel* His support.

(3) Choose some words for your mind to rest on, either from passages looked out for the purpose (it is a useful exercise to follow the word "*rest*" through the Bible, with the aid of a Concordance), or from the Psalms or Lessons for the day. And, having chosen the words, let them do their own work. Let God speak through them to your soul. Let your own attitude be one of simple attention: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

5. Realisation

Have you ever tried systematically to *practise* yourself in realising the relationship in which you stand towards God, and all that

follows from it ? If not, let me advise you to make the attempt. You will find that it has a wonderful effect in putting new life into your prayers, and you can do it quite simply and easily in some such manner as the following.

Spare a minute or two, before your regular prayers, or at any quiet pause during the day, to be spent in trying to *realise* some one or another of the beliefs which form the groundwork of your prayers. If you want to get at the heart of all that is included in this process of *realisation*, think of the sense in which the word is used in business matters. To *realise* a fortune means changing the securities which represent a certain amount of wealth, into the actual currency, which can procure us the necessaries of life. In the same way, to *realise* the truths that lend force to your prayers is to lay hold of the actual, practical value which they have in relation to the needs of every day.

" What does it mean *to me* ? " is the question you have to ask yourself about each Christian doctrine, and no one can answer it for you.

What does the Fatherhood of God mean to you? What practical difference does it make in your life to think of Him, and speak of Him, as your *Father*? How are your acts of every day affected by your belief that the Lord Jesus Christ died, and rose again, and lives now as your Saviour, Lord and Friend? What does this mean to you? How far, too, and in what ways, is the power of the Holy Spirit a *real* matter to you?—an actual element in your life, producing its effect upon your conduct.

These are only a few out of the many questions with which you should challenge yourself continually, and my advice to you is to put your answers into your own words, as a definite exercise in realisation, to be practised at any time, but specially at the beginning of the day.

Say to yourself, before you begin your morning prayers, that you are standing in the Presence of God; that He is waiting to help you, and that it is for you to make the effort needful to accept and use His help. Impress upon your mind the thought that He is

working *always*—for you as for every other one among His children—shaping the conditions of your life, influencing the wills of those with whom you are thrown. Remind yourself that if His power is a reality to you, you ought to *use* it as such, and trust yourself to it, and expect results. So that if you ask Him to work a certain work in you—to make you more loving, or brave, or true—you must assume that this work is going on, and *act upon the assumption*, making fresh efforts to banish unworthy thoughts and fears, in confidence that you are being strengthened with fresh power for the purpose.

You can work at every part of your Faith in this way; translating one doctrine after another into terms of your own experience; trying to recognise the effects which each should produce upon your life, if it is a reality to you. It is no good owning great possessions if you do not realise your ownership. You need to count them over, and reckon up their worth in the coinage you use, before you can actually employ the power they place in your hands. And just so, in spiritual

matters, if you would have your life really and truly enriched by the " exceeding greatness " of God's love and power, you must be content to spend time and pains in trying to realise the " riches of the glory of His inheritance," by counting up all the new joys, and the new powers they place within your reach.

6. Intercession

There are just a few hints which it occurs to me to offer you with regard to the practice of intercession. You can work them into an exercise for yourself.

(i)

Fix your mind upon the thought that God knows what is truly needed by those for whom you pray, and that *you do not* know. So that you only waste force by determining, too precisely, the manner in which your prayers shall work their effect.

(ii)

Direct your energies upon offering to God your will that this or that person may be

helped, this or that cause promoted, without trying to dictate to God just how it is to be done. Exert the greatest force of will that you can command, but try to leave it unreservedly in God's Hands, as an instrument for Him to use as He sees best.

(iii)

Impress upon your heart, again and again, our Lord's reminder that "*your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of*"—for yourself or others—"*before ye ask Him.*" Your work is *not* to rouse Him to the recognition of a need, but to place in His Hands a fresh instrument wherewith to meet it.

(iv)

Make it your object, in intercession, either to draw the persons prayed for into vital touch with God, or to concentrate upon them the full force of His love and power.

(v)

If you feel impelled to pray with great definiteness for a certain result to be effected,

do so with all your might, but still make an offering of the prayer to God, for Him to direct aright.

"In nothing be anxious,
but in everything, by prayer and supplication,
with thanksgiving,
make your requests known unto God.
And the peace of God,
which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds
through Christ Jesus."[1]

[1] Philippians iv.

CHAPTER XI

OUR DAILY PRAYERS

"As for me, I will call upon God: and the Lord shall save me.

In the evening, and morning, and at noonday will I pray, and that instantly; and He shall hear my voice."—PSALM lv.

UNDER this head I propose to gather up a few general hints with regard to the ordinary morning, midday and evening prayers of every day. You will find some repetitions of suggestions already made, but this is done purposely, to show how they may be applied. Here, as elsewhere, I have used the form of definite directions, for the sake of clearness, but you will not mistake this for any endeavour to dictate. You must make your own rules, only adopting these so far as they meet your case.

1. MORNING PRAYERS

Do not let your morning prayers lapse into being merely the last act in your dress-

ing, and consequently the one most liable to be hurried, or left out altogether. If there is any danger of this, you might try the plan of making your prayers come *first*, before you begin your toilet. Or else try to get up early enough to secure a definite space of quiet before the claims of the day begin; or take your real prayer-time a little later in the morning, contenting yourself with a brief committal of the new day, with all that it may bring, to God when first you rise.

It is a matter which you must settle for yourself, according to your circumstances. The important point is that you should accustom yourself to regard your time of prayer as a definite engagement, made with God, and *keep it.*

It will help you in this if you act upon the advice already given, and make a definite offering to God, *beforehand*, of whatever time you have set aside for prayer. You will be less likely then to grudge each minute as you spend it.

Practise the effort of linking your private

prayers with some act of united worship going on at the same time. It is helpful to remember that the Holy Communion—our highest effort of devotion—is being celebrated in some part of the world at every moment of every day and night. You will find that your prayers gain new force through being offered up in touch with the "blessed company of all faithful people."

2. The Midday Pause

Try not to let any day run its course without a single pause, however short, to realise afresh the relationship in which you stand towards God, and to readjust in His Presence your life and its many claims. Our faults and follies are all due to the fact that we have let ourselves drift away from Him, and the only way to escape this danger is by making a pause now and then, in the rush of each day's business, to take one's bearings afresh in relation to God.

You will find it helpful to let the striking of the clock at midday remind you of the thousands of Christians throughout the world who

form an endless chain of prayer by lifting up their hearts to God at the hour of noon. Even if you can only pause in your occupations whilst the twelve strokes are sounding, you can use them to recall you to the realisation of God's Presence. But you will find it well worth while to spare, when you can, a longer interval in which to "lay down" afresh before Him "all your hopes and all your fears, all your successes and all your failures, all your fondest hopes, and all your cherished opportunities, content to take up thence just that which God shall give you."

3. Evening Prayers

Try not to let your evening prayers be always said when you are at the last gasp of fatigue. If you have to go to bed very late, or very weary, try to get a little time earlier for your regular effort of evening prayer, and make your bedside act a simple committal of yourself and your belongings into the Hand of God.

As the key-note of morning prayer is preparation for the day that is beginning,

so the key-note of evening prayer should be the offering up of the day that is done. *Whatever* may have filled its hours—whether work, or pleasure, or simple endurance—try to offer it all to God for Him to bless and use it. Our imperfect efforts, our failures—even our mistakes—may be instruments, in His Hands, for good. Only our wilful acts of disobedience—our insincerities, our unkindnesses, our self-pleasing, and all the other ways in which we sin against God—He will not accept as offerings; and all that we cannot offer up to Him needs to be burnt up in the fire of penitence lest it should poison future days.

Think this well over, and you will find yourself at the heart of all the systems of self-examination, and acknowledgment of sins, which often seem so tiresome and formal when you come across them in a book of prayers. The formality is due to the fact that you are not yet accustomed to making the efforts they are intended to direct. Here, as in meditation, you should *begin* with the efforts, and you will soon find the value of the forms.

CHAPTER XII

A SCHEME OF EFFORTS

"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."—1 CORINTHIANS xii.

I AM offering you no fresh forms of prayer; I could not hope to improve upon those already within your reach. My object is to try and help you to *use* these effectually, and this you can do best, I think, by focussing your attention, for a time, upon the efforts you are directed to make, rather than on the forms in which they are to find expression.

I have so far been trying to deal with these efforts, one by one; I propose now to sum them up in a brief outline which you can use, if you wish, as a scheme of daily prayer. I have indicated here and there certain exercises, but only as suggestions.

For Morning Prayer

(i)

Stand first, for a short act of preparation, to consist of:

(1) A few deep breaths, to calm and clear your mind.

(2) An effort to realise the Presence of God.

(3) An effort to realise the importance of the act of prayer, and to set about it as something that will *make a difference* to yourself and others.

Exercise.—"He that cometh to God must believe that *He is*, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

(4) An assertion of the beliefs which give your prayers their force.

Exercises.—The Apostles' Creed, or the summary of this in the Catechism.

(5) An effort to open your whole being to the life-giving breath and influence of the Holy Spirit.

Exercises.—The "Collect for Inspiration," or the "Veni Creator," or the nine "Fruits of the Spirit" in Galatians v.

(ii)

Having thus put yourself in touch with God, kneel down for the main part of your prayers. Whatever else these include, there should be :

(1) An effort of *intention* (to set your will working in the right direction).

(2) The Lord's Prayer, *said*, whether aloud or not, with the careful repetition of every word, and with the earnest purpose of drawing near to God as your *Father*.

(3) An effort to realise the personal Presence and love of the Lord Jesus as the living Friend Who waits to receive your prayers, and offer up to the Father all that is true in them.

For an exercise you might well use His own promise : " Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

(4) An effort to " shut the door " of your consciousness upon the outer world, and all the cares and interests of your life, so that you may spend these few moments " alone with God."

(5) A corresponding effort to open all the inner doors of heart and mind, to

let in the breath of the Holy Spirit, to *fill* you with His power.

(6) An effort of praise, if it be only comprised in the two words: "Praise God!"

(7) An effort to lay bare before God all your sins, and cares, and weaknesses, that He may heal them. Any unkind or unforgiving thoughts about others should be specially remembered, lest they should poison the springs of power in your prayers.

(8) An effort to bring the sins and sorrows of others also within reach of the Divine touch.

(9) A simple and child-like asking from your Father whatever, at the moment, you desire and need.

(10) Coupled with this there should be a grateful recognition of His goodness to you and to others, expressed in a few words of thanksgiving.

(11) A short pause of stillness, and quiet "waiting upon God," for Him to speak to you, and bless you.

This all looks very lengthy when you read it, but as a matter of fact the whole series

of efforts need not take more than ten or fifteen minutes. And of course you can vary or shorten it to suit your needs. I have simply tried to indicate the elements which should first and foremost find a place in our morning prayers. There are *many* others which may with advantage be included.

Midday Prayers

Take, as the key-note of these, the thought "taking your bearings" afresh, in the light of God's love, as ships at sea do by the sun at noon. This will prevent you from drifting so far away from Him as you otherwise might do during the day.

Join with this also the thought of the midday *pause* in the hurry of life, even if it be only during the twelve strokes of the clock. Cultivate the habit of listening for these, and of using them to recall you into God's Presence, and to remind you of the passing of the day. Or, if you are not within sound of a clock, you may find it helpful to make a practice of repeating to yourself, at noontide, twelve "strokes of the hour." Here is one form:

"Half the day's done—
How has it run?
What vows are broken?
What wrong words spoken?
How have I tried
To keep at God's side?

Half the day still
Is mine to fill.
God still is near,
So I'll not fear!
But, with new heart,
Make a fresh start."

In addition to this "noontide pause," you should try to secure a little space of quiet in the course of the day—even if it be only for five minutes—in which to make systematic efforts at entering into a fuller realisation of the Presence, and Power, and Love of God. You must make your own scheme for this, using, if you are wise, such helps as you will find in a simple book of "Meditations."

It is a good plan, too, to centre your thoughts upon a few words chosen out of your morning reading of Psalms and Lessons.

Rest-time

Do try to secure also a tiny interval (either after your "meditation," or at some other time, as suits you best) for the most complete *rest* that you can arrive at, of body and brain and heart. The minutes thus spent will add marvellously to the worth of the hours that come after, especially if you learn to rest *in the Lord.*

I have already tried to show you what I understand by this rest; all I want to do here is to urge you to *practise* it.

Evening Prayer

You can use, in a great measure, the scheme for morning prayer, with a few variations, to omit the special efforts of *preparation,* and to include the following in their stead:

(i) A glance of the mind over the day that is past.

(ii) An endeavour to offer to God all that you have *tried* to do in His honour, and in accordance with His will.

(iii) A sincere acknowledgment of all that you recognise as having been wrong

in your thoughts, or words, or actions during the day.

(iv) A trustful committal of yourself and others to God's care.

For an exercise in this—and also for use in times of sickness or danger—I commend to you the words of blessing from the office for the Visitation of the Sick, with only the pronouns altered:

"The Almighty Lord, Who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, to Whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey, be now and evermore my defence; and make me to feel and know that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in Whom, and through Whom, I may receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Intercession should of course have its place in all your prayers.

Collects for Daily Use

In addition to the special morning and evening Collects I should strongly advise you to use sometimes one or other of the following, to be practised as separate exercises, or incorporated in your daily prayers. You would of course take them one at a time:

II. Advent, Christmas Day; IV. and VI. Epiphany; II. Lent, Palm Sunday (for Fridays); IV. Easter, Ascension Day, Whit-Sunday; IV., VI., IX., XII., XX., and XXIV. Trinity. See also the Collects at the end of the Communion Office.

Lastly, as a daily exercise, and as the best words of help and encouragement I can leave with you, let me commend to you the Collect for III. Trinity.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom Thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by Thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

APPENDIX

The following are only a very few out of many books which might be recommended as helps in the elementary stages of prayer and meditation. Each one will be found to suggest names of other works.

I. ON PRAYER

Prayer. Rev. A. J. Worlledge. *Longmans* ("Oxford Library" Series).

A clear and comprehensive treatise, written simply enough to be appreciated by general readers.

The Soul's Daily Audience of God. Rev. E. L. Cutts. *S.P.C.K.*

Quite a small book, containing a number of valuable practical suggestions.

The Churchman's Prayer Manual. Compiled by Canon Bullock-Webster. (To be obtained from the office of the *Quarterly Intercession Paper*, 1 Allhallows Lane, Upper Thames Street, London, E.C. Price 1s.)

This is a singularly comprehensive collection of prayers and schemes of devotion for a wide variety of occasions and circumstances. A few practical directions regarding the use of these are added here and there, greatly increasing the value of the book. It is carefully arranged so as to make it easily adaptable to individual needs.

Ancient Collects. Canon Bright. *Parker*, 1862.

I am not certain whether this book is still in print, but it is to be found in most theological libraries, and is well worth studying. In addition to a very beautiful collection of ancient forms of prayer, it contains a most instructive appendix on the structure and use of the "Collect" form.

II. ON MEDITATION

Suggestions on the Method of Meditation. Rev. W. B. Trevelyan. *Mowbray.*

An extremely clear and concise little manual of practical directions. In paper covers it costs only a few pence.

The Art of Meditation. G. M. Ireland Blackburne. *Mowbray.*

Another small book, similar in size and price to the above, and even simpler in teaching. It has some valuable advice for beginners.

The Way of Fellowship. Rev. F. W. Drake. *Longmans.*

A longer work, containing instructions upon all the chief points of Christian faith and practice. It has three very valuable and suggestive chapters (Nos. v., vi., and vii.) on Prayer and Meditation.

Helps to Meditation (2 vols.). Dr A. G. Mortimer. *Longmans.*

These are fairly large and expensive volumes (7s. 6d. each) containing a carefully-worked-out scheme of very full directions for daily meditations throughout the year. The detailed instructions given with each meditation make it valuable to beginners in the practice.

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VII. Can Two walk together except They be Agreed?
VIII. The Two Alternatives.
IX. The Price to be Paid.
X. "A More Excellent Way."
XI. The Mystery of Suffering.
XII. The Meaning, Method, and Practice of the Christian Science of Life.

Church Reading Magazine.—"A series of letters dealing in a simple and personal fashion with some of the difficulties that trouble many minds in the present day in connection with the various modern systems of 'New Thought.' The benefits offered by these are considered both in themselves and in their relation to the Faith of Christ. The writer has the advantage of personal knowledge of the new teaching, and of the attractions which its various forms present, so that she is able to point out from practical experience the 'more excellent way' of the Christian Faith."

Christian World.—"Charmingly written and interesting to read, these letters set forth in a pleasant familiar way the fallacies of the 'New Thought,' especially the danger of attempting to cure sin or disease by ignoring them. The letters urge that it is better to transform pain into a source of power by faith in Jesus Christ than to deny the facts of life, and set the mind on subtle schemes 'for getting our own way.'"

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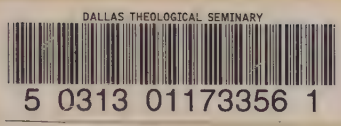

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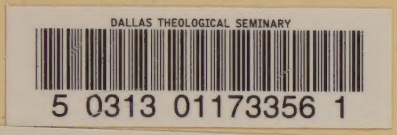

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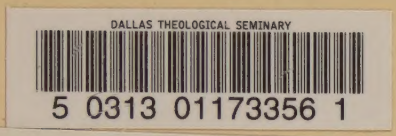

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